THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS
BENGALURU • TUESDAY • JANUARY 16, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 18 • LATE CITY EDITION

WFI to go ahead with executive meet today

The suspended Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) will go ahead with its Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday and has vowed not to budge from its decision of hosting the national championships despite the sports ministry issuing a warning against it. The notice for the Executive Committee was issued on December 31. "We are going ahead with the meeting. I am expecting all affiliated units to attend," WFI President Sanjay Singh said |P10

DADLS-81

JAI JAGANNATHA

SHREEMANDIRA PARIKRAMA PRAKALPA

Pousha Shukla Saptami
17 January 2024

With the Blessings of
Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannatha
The 'Shree Mandira Parikrama Prakalpa'
will be inaugrated on
17th January 2024

The inauguration ceremony will be telecast live on
all Odia TV channels and live streamed on the "IPR Odisha" YouTube Channel 7 AM onwards

OIPR- 15001/13/0260/2324

XPRESS FOCUS SMD INITIATIVE

PURI PARIKRAMA | *A dream project...*

'4 AM OFFICER' FULFILS CHIEF MINISTER'S 'DREAM' !!

On May 3, 2019, Cyclone Fani played havoc with Puri. It devastated the holy town, demolishing houses, uprooting trees and killing countless birds and animals. Hundreds of people were ruined; many lost their lives. The residents of Puri were utterly despondent, wondering how they would rebuild their lives; where would the wherewithal come from for them to gather the remnants of their lives and move on. That is when Chief Minister kindled hope among the people of Puri. He visited Puri, listened to their woes and extended all possible assistance from the government to help them pick up the pieces of their disrupted lives.

While on his way to Puri, the Chief Minister was in deep contemplation, praying to Lord Jagannath. He raised both his hands in supplication every time he saw a hoarding with a picture of the Lord. As he reached the Srimandir, he was pained to see sorry state of the surroundings of the temple. Hundreds of shops had encroached the periphery of the temple, making movement extremely difficult for devotees. The stench from the garbage heaped on either side of the narrow passages around the temple, coupled with open urination on the walls of the temple, was unbearable. That was the time when idea of giving the world famous 12th century shrine a complete makeover germinated in the mind of the Chief Minister. The seed planted that day has now grown into a massive, multi-hued tree called the 'Srimandir Heritage Corridor Project'. The Chief Minister was convinced it was the Lord's wish.

Mr VK Pandian, the Chief Minister's close confidante, took upon himself the onerous responsibility of making the 'dream' project of his boss into a reality. He displayed amazing commitment, sincerity and dedication in discharging his holy duty in the service of the Lord. People will find it hard to believe that he met officials, in the presence of the Chief Minister, no less than 51 times even before the master plan was given final shape! Eight of these meetings were with the cultural advisors, six with the technical consultants, 15 with the design engineers and 22 times with officials of various departments.

About 15 acres of land, both government and private, was acquired around the temple before work on the heritage corridor project commenced. Those who lost their land were compensated handsomely and rehabilitated satisfactorily. There were many other hiccups along the way, including long-drawn courts cases, that threatened to derail the whole project. But nothing deterred the Chief Minister, who was determined to see his dream project through. On November 24, 2021, he laid the foundation of the project.

The Chief Minister's able lieutenant VK Pandian left no stone unturned to fulfil his master's wish. He has been visiting Puri twice or thrice every week since 2019 to monitor the progress of the work. The most noteworthy aspect of these frequent visits was that he always reached the Srimandir at 4 am and discussed with the collector, SP, officials off the OBCC and others the progress of the work and sorted out all bottlenecks. He has visited Puri over 500 times in the last four years; his early morning visits earning for him the sobriquet "4 am officer" in the national media! His dedication, sincerity and work ethics left an indelible impression on everyone who had anything to do with the project. Such rare commitment to a particular project has seldom been seen before.

With the Lord's blessings, the Srimandir Heritage Corridor project has now taken shape. Devotees can circumnavigate both the inner an outer periphery of the temple without any hindrance. They can now have a hassle-free darshan of the deities and enjoy a natural ambience, beautiful gardens and a host of world class amenities. The heritage corridor will enhance the safety and security of both the temple and the pilgrims.

The heritage corridor project is going to be opened for the people on January 17, 2024

Special darshan services for Divyangs, elderly devotees in Puri Srimandir

As of January 2024, barriers such as crowds and long queues will no longer deter devotees of Mahaprabhu Jagannath, particularly those with disabilities (Divyangs) and senior citizens.

In a thoughtful initiative, the Srimandir administration in Puri has introduced a Special Darshan system and a dedicated support center for senior Dibyangas near the administrative office. Recognizing the concerns of senior citizens who wish to witness the divine presence of Lord Jagannath but are discouraged by the crowd, the state government has taken individual attention measures.

A special Divyang help-desk has been established to facilitate a streamlined Darshan process for both Dibyangas and senior citizens, ensuring they have a comfortable and hassle-free experience. The Srimandir management has arranged for wheelchairs, with eight provided by the district social security office, to assist Dibyangas and senior citizens during their Darshan.

Additionally, battery-operated autos have been organized to transport them from Jagannathballav Matha premises to the temple, making the journey accessible and convenient.

The system, initially implemented in Badadanda, will extend to the newly constructed Sridanda, ensuring devotees who park within Jagannathballav have access to government-provided battery autos.

Dibyangas and senior devotees can avail themselves of this service free of charge. Furthermore, on significant occasions such as Mahaprabhu's Rathayatra, New Year, and other festivals, special arrangements have been put in place for Dibyangas and senior devotees. Volunteers play a crucial role in these initiatives, contributing to the success of the program.

Municipal executive officer Saroj Swain emphasized the individualized arrangements being made for Dibyangas and senior citizens on January 17, 2024. This thoughtful approach ensures that no disciple is deprived of the spiritual experience due to physical limitations

Beauty and Safety of Temple at the Core of Heritage Corridor Project

The Lord Jagannath temple in Puri is known the world over both for its antiquity and its glorious traditions spanning centuries. Also known as Srimandir, the art and architecture of the holy Hindu shrine, built in the 12th century, is truly breathtaking. While the primary objective behind the Srimandir Heritage Corridor project was to provide world class amenities to the thousands of devotees who throng it daily, it was also aimed at protecting the centuries-old heritage of the temple and its surroundings. With both the temple periphery and the magnificent beach wearing a new, refurbished look, devotees and tourists are expected to throng the holy beach town in greater numbers than ever before.

The Srimandir has faced numerous attacks by invaders over the centuries. That is why the gigantic Meghanad Pacheri (boundary wall) and 'Jaga Gharas' (wrestling pits) were built to give protection to the temple. But with many shops and buildings coming up over time, the lanes around the temple had become progressively narrower, making it difficult to provide security to the temple when needed. While the lanes and bylanes around the temple kept getting narrower, the crowd thronging the temple kept getting bigger. The stifling congestion made it well nigh impossible for devotees to circumnavigate the temple, considered a sacred ritual. Many devotees were deprived of witnessing the 'Suna Besha', when the Lord glitters in all His majesty donning tons of gold jewellery, due to the lack of space around the temple. After the heritage corridor project is over, devotees can watch the 'Suna Besha' as well as other important holy spectacles like the Rath Yatra and 'Niladri Bije' (when the Lord and His siblings return to their abode after their nine-day long sojourn to their aunt's place). The sankirtan troupes can also do the rounds of the temple unhindered by the crowd and congestion.

"A 100-feet wide road was conceived for the smooth conduct of Rath Yatra before the 8th century. Along with the Srimandir Heritage Corridor project, the state government has taken up over a hundred other projects. I don't think any work of such dimension has been done in the last seven centuries. So, everyone should be part of the development project. If everyone works in unison, Odisha can certainly prove its mettle in every field," says Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingh Deb, the head of the Temple Management Committee and the Lord's First Servitor.

There were two temples and 18 mutts within the area earmarked for the heritage corridor project. Many of these mutts were closely linked with the rituals of the Jagannath temple. These 20 religious establishments were redeveloped while keeping the places of worship and the worshipped gods and goddesses in these mutts intact. After the redevelopment, these heritage sites, which had long gone out of sight due to the maze of buildings around them, will be visible to the devotees again. Lord Jagannath is the identity of Odisha and the state government has always respected the saints and sages who have kept the spiritual flag flying high for centuries.

Committed to the all-round development of Odisha, the state government took a decision to remove all encroachment within 75 meters of the temple for the Heritage Corridor project while taking care to preserve the beauty and sanctity of the temple. Many people thought it was impossible to uproot mutts, houses of servitors and buildings that had stood for centuries. But the grace of the Lord, the attractive compensation package announced by the state government and, above all, the generous and whole-hearted support and cooperation of the mahants of mutts, servitors and the general public made it possible in the end. The people of Puri truly deserve kudos for their sacrifice and unstinted cooperation for the project.

The entire area within 75 meters of the Meghanad Pacheri has now been cleared of all encroachment. Out of this, an area of 164.470 feet has been kept open. There will be two layers of corridors outside the Meghanad Pacheri. The Lord will appear amid chanting of His name by the devotes in the 32-feet wide inner corridor. The inner corridor is surrounded by a 30-feet wide green corridor which, in turn, is surrounded by a 26-feet wide outer corridor. Devotees will move around in the rest 25-meter (82.02 feet) area. Witnessing the world famous Rath Yatra will not be an ordeal for the devotees anymore.

Under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and 5T Chairperson VK Pandian's timely advice, work on the development of Srimandir as well as the metamorphosis of the pilgrim city is now progressing on a war footing. The long-term road map drawn for the all-round development of the temple and the town is finally going to reach its destination. After the project is dedicated to the people, Puri will attract more devotees and tourists than it has ever done in the past.

XPRESS FOCUS SMD INITIATIVE

PURI PARIKRAMA | A dream project...

THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE SRIMANDIR HERITAGE PROJECT DEDICATED TO LORD JAGANNATH

The Srimandir Heritage Corridor project, to be dedicated to the people shortly, has shown that even stones can worship the Lord. 'Utkala', the land of superior art, is famous for its architecture all over the world. Art and architecture are the symbols of the dedication and devotion of Odias. That is why the Odias had constructed the Srimandir,

the magnificent edifice of Orissan art and architecture, for Lord Jagannath.

Naveen Patnaik, the popular Chief Minister of Odisha, had insisted on giving priority to the Kalingan style of temple architecture from the very beginning of the heritage corridor project. The art and craft of Odia artisans have come alive in every construction undertaken.

Mr. VK Pandian, Chairman of the 5T initiative of the government, has paid special attention to the corridor project since its beginning. He has worked hard to get the project completed while strictly adhering to the principles of timeliness and commitment as part of the 5T initiative and to present it as a world class example of its efficacy.

Khondalite stones, specially used in the construction of temples, have been used in the Heritage Corridor project. The stones used in the construction have been sourced from various places. Khondalite stones have been used in all statues, pillars, walls, power houses, toilets, rest rooms, pandals, arches and open-air theatres constructed as part of the project.

Eminent sculptor Bhabani Mishra, hired as an advisor to ensure adherence to the Kalingan style of temple architecture in the heritage corridor project, has said that the guidelines of the National Monuments Authority (NMA) have been followed in the project as well as in the conservation and beautification of the mutts as part of it.

5T Chairman Mr VK Pandian has been monitoring every aspect of the Srimandir Heritage Corridor project from Day One. He has constantly striven to present the project as a symbol of Odisha's self-respect.

The Lord Jagannath Temple is an exquisite example of art and architecture. The heritage corridor project is stretching the limits of creativity through stones.

HOLY PONDS GET MAKEOVER

The pilgrim town of Puri is not just the abode of Lord Jagannath. It is also home to numerous ancient temples and mutts that have enriched its history aand culture. These temples and mutts have drawn countless sages and holy men to this spiritual city over the centuries.

But it is the many holy ponds that have been a special attraction for pilgrims coming to Puri from all over the world. They are considered holy because many rituals of the temples in town including the Lord Jagannath temple, the biggest and holiest of them all, are performed in their waters or on their banks.

These ponds were in a dilapidated state due to centuries of neglect and disrepair. The need to give them a facelift was felt by the state government when

it decided to launch the ambitious Srimandir Heritage Corridor project in 2021. Work on the renovation and beautification of four of the holiest ponds in the town, which began in June, 2022, is expected to be completed in the next 3-4 months. Together with the heritage corridor project, it will give the pilgrim town a whole new look.

While there are many ponds in the town, four of the five holiest, known as 'Pancha Teertha', have been taken up for renovation and beautification in the first phase. They are: Shwetaganga, Markendeya, Indradyumna and Narendra.

The renovation of these ponds at an estimated cost of Rs 66.67 crore is part of the ABADHA project and is being implemented by the Odisha Bridge Construction Corporation (OBCC).

That is not all. Vignettes of the heritage of the holy ponds have been engraved on their

walls which will tell the pilgrims about their significance. Stories of the origin and religious importance of the ponds are being engraved on khondalite stones and fixed on the walls by expert artisans.

The idea is to make sure the pilgrim/tourist goes back with a wholesome and pleasant experience and encourages others to visit the ponds. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has been praised in various quarters for his farsighted initiative to give the holy ponds a much-needed makeover.

KANCHI ABHIYAN INSCRIBED THROUGH PATTA CHITRA

THE Parikrama Marg is all set to narrate the story of Padmavati. Devotees will witness images of the Kanchi Abiyan on the British era water tank. This glorious story will be depicted through the traditional painting in art form at the historic village of Raghurajpur. While touring around the temple, the devotees will not only witness the huge 50 feet water tank of British-era water tank, but will also experience the narratives of Lord Mahaprabhu Jagannath and the untold stories of his devotee Gajapati Purushottama Dev and Kanchi princess Padmavati . The decision has been taken by the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and 5 T chairman VK Pandian. With a view to leave an imprint of Mahaprabhu Lord Jagannath culture which is a part of Puri Parikrama Project.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT MARKS A NEW ERA OF SPIRITUAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

PURI, renowned as the soul city of world heritage, is set to become a global pilgrimage destination, attracting an immense influx of devotees for the enchanting Jaga Darshan. Following a transformation, Puri's Blue-Flag Beach, Konark Sun Temple, Pipili Chandua, Raghurajpur's Pattachitra, and Neelambu Chilika are poised to captivate tourists, elevating Odisha's allure. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's foresight shines as he advocates for an international greenfield airport in Puri, addressing the city's growing prominence. His letter to the Prime Minister highlights the need for this vital infrastructure, emphasizing Puri's significance as a Chardham and its proximity to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, serene beaches, and cultural treasures. The airport's strategic location connects major religious hubs, promising a surge in tourism and contributing to the state's economic development. Chief Minister Patnaik envisions a future where Puri welcomes devotees from 192 countries, making the famous Rathayatra accessible to pilgrims worldwide. As the construction gears up, Puri anticipates bridging spiritual significance with economic prosperity.

AC TUNNEL... A FACILITY PAR EXCELLENCE.

THE Ac Tunnel project was undertaken in the Puri's Bada Danda under the 5T Chairman VK Pandian's initiative with a view to provide the devotees a hassle free darshan of the Lord Shri Jagannath. The decision was taken to complete the project on war footing . Due to administrative initiatives the project could be completed within a short span of time and the tunnel became operational. The tunnel is equipped with central Ac and houses steel railing which facilitate the devotees to stand in queue while waiting for lords darshan. Further the queue system is also equipped with seating facility. The devotees can sit at their respective waiting places in the queue. The devotees are now able to have the darshan of the deities without stressing themselves in the scorching heat. Apart form the common people the senior citizens have been given special attention, Separate queues are organized for senior citizens which are also providing a great experience for the senior citizens. People are thronging to the holy city and are excited to have a glimpse of the ***Puri Parikrama Prakalpa*** and the government is also equally keen and working towards the completion of the project and putting great efforts to provide the devotees a hassle free and comfortable Darshan ■

Modern Market Complex

PURI, the sacred town, continues its rapid transformation with yet another milestone in the development of Shree Khetra. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's vision for trade flourishing within the Puri parikrama prakalpa has become a reality, manifesting in the construction of an ultra-modern market complex. Reconstruction of two old markets, Mochi Sahi and Market Chowk, ensuring the livelihoods of traders affected by the acquisition. The Mahodadhi market complex, spanning 10,889 square meters in Mochi Sahi, accommodates 151 shops, with a total expenditure of Rs. 41.25 Crores. This state-of-the-art complex features amenities like lifts and fire-fighting equipment, enhancing the trading experience for both traders and customers. Additionally, a three-storied market complex has been constructed at Market Chowk, within the Municipality Market, with an expenditure of Rs. 44.81 lakhs. Scheduled to be inaugurated on the 17th.

SRI DANDA TO EASE TRAFFIC ON BADA DANDA

THE days of overcrowding on the Bada Danda (Grand Road) in Puri are now over. The upcoming Sri Danda, an alternative road being constructed to the Srimandir, will help ease the traffic on the Bada Danda and save the pilgrims the hassles of negotiating their way to

the temple. The 40-feet wide road will pass through Dandimala and Chudanga Sahi to end up at Jagannath Ballav mutt.

Devotees coming from outside Puri will now land at Jagnnath Ballav, park their vehicles there and head straight towards Srimandir through the shaded, airconditioned pathway on battery operated autorickshaws. After alighting at the temple reception centre, they will walk past the Saana Chhataa mutt and enter the temple through the side of Meghanad Pacheri (boundary wall). After having darshan of the deities, they will return to the parking place at Jagannath Ballav the same way and proceed to their respective places from there on their vehicles.

The alternative road is being constructed at a cost of Rs 14 crores. Sixty eight percent of the land being used for the road is either Jagannath Temple land or government land while the rest 32% is private land. A total of 1.448 acres of land has been acquired from people, 0.8798 acres from 66 families in Chudanga Sahi and 0.265 acres from 18 families in Dandaimala Sahi, after paying them due compensation. The survey and public hearing for acquisition of the land was completed in just four days. Work on the road began only after the affected people gave their consent at the public hearing.

Sri Danda, conceived as part of the Srimandir Heritage Corridor project envisioned by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, will act as a bridge between the Lord and his devotees. Having darshan of the Lord will now become a pleasurable, hassle-free experience.

Shelter for 3, 000 Pilgrims in Puri

PILGRIMS coming to Puri, especially the poor among them, have reason to cheer! They can now spend a few days in the holy town without having to pay through their nose for accommodation. As part of the ambitious plan to build Puri into a world class pilgrim centre, the state government is building a massive dharmashala (dormitory) in the town that can accommodate as many as 3, 000 people and will cost a fraction of what they would have to fork out for staying in a hotel. The mammoth dharmashala for 3, 000 coming up on 10 acres of Lord Jagannath's land at Baseli Sahi will take care of all their accommodation hassles. The project, estimated to cost Rs 135.6 crores, is being implemented by Srji Krupa Limited. Divided into six blocks, the four-storeyed dharmashala will provide accommodation at the rate of just Rs 200-400 a night. Besides dormitories, it will also have two-bed and three-bed rooms available for tourists.

World Class Amenities for World Heritage Site

WHEN Puri is getting a makeover, how can Konark remain behind? The ambitious plan to build the abode of Lord Jagannath into a world class heritage city, currently underway, includes an equally ambitious plan to develop Konark, famous worldwide for the magnificent edifice dedicated to the Sun God, into an international tourist destination with world class amenities.

Part of the 'Golden Triangle' tourist circuit, Konark is already an international tourist destination. It received the coveted tag of a World Heritage Site from UNESCO in 1984 for the Sun Temple, which represents the pinnacle of the Orissan style of temple architecture. Built by King Langula Narasingha Deb of the Ganga dynasty in the 13th century, Sun Temple leaves the visitor marvelling at its awe-inspiring grandeur and the intricate, exquisite sculpture.

The state government drew up a comprehensive plan to upgrade and modernise amenities matching its importance as an international tourist destination under its 5T initiative. Helmed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and 5T Chairperson VK Pandian, the project would give Konark a complete makeover and make it a tourist-friendly place.

As the first component of the all-round development of Konak, the state government six-laning of the 3.5 km long outer ring road out of its own funds in 2021. Simultaneously, the road from the Chandrabhaga beach to the Sun Temple is also being developed as a six-lane road. Besides, all roads leading up to the Temple are being redeveloped. Tourist pick up points all along the road from the state capital Bhubaneswar are also being developed as part of the infrastructural development initiative.

Meghanad Pacheri Regains its Lost Glory

THE Lord Jagannath temple, also known as Srimandir, has many unique features. One of them is the imposing boundary wall encircling the Temple on all four sides, which is known as the Meghanad Pacheri. The boundary wall, rising to a great height, is closely linked to the history and culture of Puri as it provides a protective ring around the Temple. As per the Madala Panji, it was built by Gajapati King Kapilendra Deba in 1448 mainly to protect the Temple from attacks by invaders. Meghanad Pacheri, which forms the outer periphery of the Temple, is built with shana stones. It has four entry gates on the four sides. The entry gates on the east, west, north and south side are known as Singha Dwara (Lion's Gate), Byaghra Dwara (Tiger's Gate), Hasti Dwara (Elephant Gate) and Ashwa Dwara (Horse Gate) respectively.The magnificent wall had lost its charm and attraction as devotees and tourists often lost sight of the grandeur of the boundary wall due to the congestion all around it.

Green Cover Around Srimandir

PLENTY of greenery in the periphery of the temple. Out of the 55-meter buffer zone of the project, an area of 19 meters has been earmarked for a green cover, enhancing the beauty of the project. About 120 species of small and big plants, which have an intrinsic relation with the rituals of the Lord Jagannath temple, are being planted. They include plants like Boulakoli, Golden Champa, Rudra Champa, Wood Champa, Kadamba, Akasha Malli, Gangashiuli, Neem, Chathiana, Nageswar and Magamalli etc. Small plants used in the puja of the Lord and preparation of mahaprasad for Him on a daily basis are being planted within 5 meters of the buffer zone. These plants include Tulsi (basil) plants that of Lord Jagannath cannot do without. Along with flower garlands, Tulsi garlands also adorn the neck and hands of Lord Jagannath. Keeping all these things in mind, Tulsi plant has been given pride of place in the Srimandir Parikrama project. Some of the plants have been collected locally while many have been sourced from places in other states like Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. The maximum number of plants have been brought from Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh.

'Blue Flag' Beach in Puri

PURI is not just a spiritual place. It is also home to a beautiful golden beach, the Sun Temple in Konark and the Chilka Lake, a biodiversity marvel and a Ramsar site that attracts lakhs of migratory birds from places as far as Siberia. The 'Blue Flag' beach, in particular, has been a huge draw for tourists coming to Puri. With its world class amenities, the pristine beach is attracting international tourists looking for fun and frolic on the sea beach by hordes. The state government envisaged a 'Blue Flag' beach, complete with world class amenities, on a particular segment of it spread over an area of 860 meters starting from Gandhi Ghat to Mayfair Hotel. It was taken up as a pilot project by the Society of Integrated Coastal Management (Siscom) and the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change in 2018. The stretch that is now known as the Blue Flag beach was identified after a series of visits by officials. Siscom worked hard for two and a half years and spent Rs 8.5 crores to fulfil the 33 norms required to get the coveted Blue Flag tag. A green cover has been created for the tourists to breath clean air. Emphasis has also been laid on clean water for bathing. The committee for the management of the beach has said that tourist footfall has been rising with each passing year.

ALMANAC TODAY
• **Tuesday:** 16/01/2024 • **Year:** Shobhakruta • **Ayana:** Uttharayana • **Ritu:** Himantha • **Masa:** Pushya • **Paksha:** Shukla • **Tithi:** Panchami 7.24 am • **Nakshatra:** Purvabhadra 11.22 am • Moon in Mesha Rashi • **Rahukaala:** 03:00 am to 04:30 am • **Gulikakala:** 12:00 pm to 01:30 pm • **Yamaganda:** 09:00 am to 10:30 am

WEATHER MIN 15°C | MAX 30°C
FORECAST Breaks of sun late

Sunrise 6.45 am | Sunset 6.12 pm | Moonrise 10.44 am | Moonset 11.08 pm

COURT PULLS UP LOKAYUKTA COPS FOR LAPSES IN PROBES

Acquits 4 former officials of Kannada and Culture dept accused of misappropriating Kannada Rajyotsava gold medals

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

THE Special Court for Lokayukta Cases castigated the Karnataka Lokayukta police for their "utter negligence, serious lapses in conducting the investigation, filing of final reports without application of mind and adhering to procedure", stating that it is leading to victimising of innocents and escape of real culprits from the clutches of law, and compelling the courts to invest valuable time for no purpose. This not only makes the general public lose faith in the system, but also renders injustice rather than justice to the common people, it added.

Judge KM Radhakrishna passed the order, while acquitting four accused – BS Shivaprakash, the then First Division Assistant; MP Baligar, the then Commissioner; KT Chikkanna, the then Joint Director; and SI Bhavikatti, the then Manager of Kannada and Culture Department — of the charges of misappropriation of gold medals kept in their custody for presentation to Kannada Rajyotsava awardees, as the prosecution failed to prove the case.

Offering this case as an example of negligence and lapses by investigation officers (IOs) in several cases it has come across for castigating the Lokayukta police, the Special Court highlighted that the said case was registered in 2014 in violation of the statutory requirement by inspector NG Shivashankar based on media reports, even without conducting the preliminary investigation into the allegations of misappropriation of six gold medals mentioned in the audit report of the Accountant General, which is false.

"They (IOs) have developed the habit of completely depending upon their assistants to prepare the final reports without taking any pain in the matter of investigation. They decline to look into the papers personally, but entrust the whole responsibility of an investigation to their assistants, who lack procedural knowledge. This indicates a lack of commitment to the officers in ascertaining the correctness or otherwise of such reports. They submit the chargesheets to the courts by simply putting their signatures and washing off their hands after getting case numbers from the court," the court observed.

Observing that the IOs were least bothered about the limitations prescribed under the CrPC regarding the completion of the probe and submitting the final reports on time, the court said this leads to the pendency of cases before the courts, decades together apart from compelling the litigants to face unnecessary embarrassments by losing their valuable time, money, health, etc. The pending FIRs from 2014 till date before this court are the best example of how the limitations are being ignored. This delay in filing the chargesheets results in serious lapses, shortcomings, procedural irregularity and destruction of evidence due to lapse of time and gives scope for the real culprits to escape from the clutches of law, the court noted.

Directing the Lokayukta police to return 19 gold medals and 188 files seized during the investigation to the Kannada and Culture Department, the court asked the office to forward the copy of the judgement to the Additional Director General of Police, Karnataka Lokayukta, for information and sensitising the officers concerned.

"I think this is the right time to bring these kinds of lapses to the notice of the higher-ups concerned," said Judge Radhakrishna.

They (IOs) have developed the habit of completely depending upon their assistants to prepare the final reports without taking any pain in the matter of investigation. They entrust the whole responsibility of an investigation to their assistants — Special Court for Lokayukta Cases

An unauthorised borewell being drilled at Sai Serenity Layout in Basavanapura

Builder mafia sinking illegal borewells with impunity, say residents

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

DESPITE repeated complaints and directions from the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), illegal drilling of borewells in the city is continuing unabated. While in the first week of January, three unauthorised borewells were sunk in three days in Whitefield, in the latest incident, one such borewell was drilled on Krishna Yamuna Road at Sai Serenity Layout in Basavanapura ward on Sunday and Monday.

Illegal borewell drilling poses a risk as several parts of the city fall under an over-exploitation area termed as 'red zone'.

Residents said the builder mafia is choosing holidays to carry out their dirty work to avoid inspection and notices from officials.

Kumar Naik, Chief Engineer of Bengaluru East, BWSSB, said if people raise a complaint, the BWSSB will direct the police to act and BESCOM to sever the power connections.

Residents said instead of stopping illegal borewells, the officials are talking of discontinuing power supply, which means they are siding with illegal borewell drillers.

"The builders here are calling the shots, and many constructions are against the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) bylaws. Five to seven floors are built, there are no sewage connection, and raw sewage is being diverted to the lake and illegal borewells are drilled often. The issue was raised with officials in the past, but nothing has happened. I hope Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar, who keeps on harping about creating 'Brand Bengaluru' will have the guts to crack down on illegal buildings," said a resident.

In Whitefield, residents have been complaining about illegal borewell drilling, but officials are just turning a blind eye, said Sandeep Anirudhan, convenor, Namma Whitefield. "Between January 4 and 7, three illegal borewells were drilled," he said.

"None of the officials pick up phones. It is as though this was to allow the violators to finish the illegal drilling. This raises a host of questions on what is going on behind the scenes. There are allegations of corruption. Officials have been claiming that they are under pressure from politicians and goons. If that is the case, why can't they complain to the police? Or if they can't do their job, why don't they resign? In this case, unless the authority seals illegal borewells, imposes heavy fines, files an FIR against the violators and the contractors, cancels the contractor's licence, and seizes all the equipment used for drilling, doubts will not be laid to rest," he said.

Of the 40-plus cases in the last two months, every single one was attempted for commercial or construction use, both of which are banned as Bengaluru is notified as a 'red zone,' yet officials failed to act, noted Anirudhan.

Double-decker buses to ply on roads again, tenders soon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

AFTER getting the state cabinet nod recently to induct ten electric double-decker buses, the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation is working in earnest on floating the tender soon. The bus corporation has been trying to bring back the once-famed double-decker buses to Bengaluru for over a decade, but all its attempts had failed till now.

Sources from the corporation said the buses will be operated on a Gross Cost Contract (GCC) basis and it will purchase the vehicles.

"Last year, when the BJP government was in power, tenders were floated to procure five double-decker buses. The lone bidder, Switch Mobility, the electric vehicle arm of Ashok Leyland, had quoted Rs 10 crore for the five buses. Even before the tenders were approved, the state went into elections and the Congress government came to power in May. The tender was scrapped citing that the quote of Rs 2 crore per bus was high," the source said.

The bus corporation was asked to go for fresh tenders. However, in the internal meetings, it was decided that instead of going for direct procurement which will be a huge burden on the bus corporation that is facing a financial crunch, it was decided to go for the GCC model, the source said.

The source said steps are being taken to float the tender soon.

Martyr's mom seeks min's help to fix damaged plaque

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

A plaque installed in honour of Major Akshay Girish, who laid down his life while fighting terrorists at Nagrota in Jammu and Kashmir in November 2016, on Sadahalli Road was broken to bits after a car rammed into it early on Sunday.

Major Girish's mother, Meghna Girish, took to platform X on Sunday seeking the intervention of minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who is also the local MLA, to restore the damaged memorial. She also uploaded a picture of the damaged plaque. Girish's father has filed a complaint with the jurisdictional Chikkajala police station and investigation has found that it was damaged in an accident, and not destroyed by miscreants.

After installing the plaque in December 2020, the minister had stated that the Sadahalli Road was named in honour of Major Girish.

"There is no ulterior motive behind the incident. Steps have been taken to restore the plaque. The complaint was received on Sunday evening. No complaint has been registered yet. The plaque was damaged in an accident by a drunk driver in the wee hours of Sunday. The driver escaped with the vehicle," said an officer.

The plaque was broken when a drunk driver rammed his car into it on Sunday

Ved Prakash Malik, former Chief of Army Staff, replied to the post expressing his anger. "This is heartless, sadistic act which needs to be punished. The plaque will be restored soonest I hope (sic)," he posted while tagging Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others.

EXPRESS READ

Karnataka Sahithya Academy seeks entries for Book Prize

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Sahithya Academy has invited applications from authors and publishers for the Book Prize 2022. Works in different genres such as poetry, novels, drama and children's literature among others published in 2022 are eligible for the prize. Four copies of the eligible works should be submitted to the Registrar, Karnataka Sahithya Academy, Kannada Bhavana, JC Road, Bengaluru - 560002 by February 20. Works not eligible include reprinted books, research papers and works by academy award-winning writers, according to a release from the academy. For submission guidelines, visit: www.sahithyaacademy.karnataka.gov.in **ENS**

T-20 India-Afganistan match: Metro trains to ply till 11.45 pm tomorrow

Bengaluru: Namma Metro will run train services till 11.45 pm on Wednesday from the four terminal Metro stations on the Purple and Green Lines in view of the T-20 cricket match between India and Afghanistan. Commuters can purchase return journey paper tickets from 2 pm on the same day. Priced at Rs 50, the paper tickets will be valid for a single trip starting from Cubbon Park and MG Road metro stations to any destination only on the day of issue from 8 pm. QR tickets will be available at the regular price with a 5% usual discount when purchased on the match day, and will remain valid for the entire day. People have been advised to opt for QR tickets, through WhatsApp, Namma Metro app, or PayTM. During the extended hours, only QR tickets, smart cards and paper tickets will be accepted at Cubbon Park and MG Road Metro stations. **ENS**

AT 215 FEET, CITY'S TALLEST FLAG POLE TO BE R-DAY ATTRACTION

The flag pole being erected at Chandra Layout in Vijayanagar

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

THIS Republic Day, the tricolour will fly high over the city. Towering at 215 feet, the tallest flag pole in the city is coming up in Vijayanagar, and it is expected to be the star attraction on January 26.

According to Hemanth HG, the contractor carrying out the work, former minister and Vijayanagar MLA M Krishnappa funded the project under the MLA grant. "The flag pole, erected at Chandra Layout, is 210-ft high with a 5-ft Ashoka emblem on top," he said.

He added that hoisting and unfurling of the tricolour will be done as per the National Flag Code and every two months the flag will be replaced. "Due to wind, the flag may be damaged or torn and hence it will be replaced with a new one. To raise and lower the flag, there is a provision for manual as well as motorised operation. An 8-mm steel wire will be connected to a 3HP motor for smooth operation. Once the project is completed, it will be handed over to the BBMP for annual maintenance," the contractor added.

The pole weighs 19 tonnes and the pile foundation was done in December. The huge pole was erected using a crane. The work on constructing concrete steps around the flag post is under progress and it will be ready before January 25.

Earlier, a 213-ft flag pole was installed at the National Military Museum near Raj Bhavan. However, the state government received flak over non-maintenance of the flag and the lack of a team operating the hydraulic machine.

Speaking to *The New Indian Express*, MLA Krishnappa said the project is being executed at a cost of Rs 1 crore under the MLA grant. "The four-headed lion on the pole is not just visible to the residents of Vijayanagar, but also to those in the neighbouring assembly segments," he said, adding that the works started on November 30 last year.

Daily Starscope

PETER VIDAL

16TH January : Freedom, adventure, romance! That's what the approaching Jupiter-Neptune alignment offers. Its significance is a long-term one, extending over the next one or two years but, in the short run, we might soon see some headline-grabbing event, such as a major jail-break, or a move to independence by one of the world's forgotten people.

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)
You have undoubtedly been in a state of anxiety regarding money in the past, but I don't see that you have anything to worry about at present. Today's lunar alignments should kick-start you into making the most of certain prosperous openings, mainly because you'll be able to cope with practical details.

TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)
The Moon's challenge to your sign makes it difficult for you to relax or dodge responsibilities and commitments. There'll always be someone looking over your shoulder, reminding you of all those necessary tasks. However, the alignment is basically a positive one, so you should find plenty of friendly support.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
You are essentially good-natured, it is true. You also have a unique capacity to see the best in others. Now that the stars are in such an idealistic mood you may put your money where your mouth is and give partners what they need most - hard cash. But you have to be sure that you're not being taken for a ride.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
You're in an ambitious phase, so there's no use in pretending that you're a sweet, amenable little thing. Come out fighting and friends and colleagues will respect you all the more. If you're on the lookout for bargains, the afternoon could bring your best moments.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)
At last partners or business colleagues are showing their true colours. Or are they? This is a time for illusions and apparitions, and first impressions and surface appearances are not to be trusted. In matters of the heart, you can get your way with a generous gesture.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)
The Sun is moving through an imaginative region of your solar chart, urging you to become more pliable and broadminded about domestic affairs. Underlying resentments may surface within a few days, possibly to everyone's relief. After all, it will be good to clear the air.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)
This is bound to be a period of far-reaching changes in your life, in the personal sphere as much as the professional. Your main hope over the next forty- eight hours is to get financial affairs on a firmer footing. In love, you're still keeping your secrets, perhaps wisely.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
With both Venus and Mercury boosting your social charms, now is the time to promote your closest relationships and do your best by other people. You can use your time wisely to mend any rifts that opened last week and move to prevent future disagreements before they arise.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 22)
You can always get what you want, even if sometimes you don't get what you need. You may temporarily have to accept a situation which is far from perfect. Yet I would imagine that, within a few days, you'll be back on course and nothing and nobody will be able to hold you back.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20)
A series of decisive planetary aspects signifies that the course of true love may be rather uneven but is about to sweep you away. This week's planets are urging you to give yourself over to your feelings. Even a daydream may help you find a positive way forward.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)
The Moon allies itself with Jupiter in stress-ing the personal dimension of career issues. Even those Aquarians who have released themselves from the bondage of work should now be promoting their interests in the commu-nity. You could even soon take charge in a group or society of like-minded people.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)
Sociable Pisceans are on top form. Hopefully, those of you who have been too shy in the past have taken my advice and got yourselves embroiled in group activities. And, if all goes well, now you are finding it much easier to meet certain people who you once regarded with awe.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

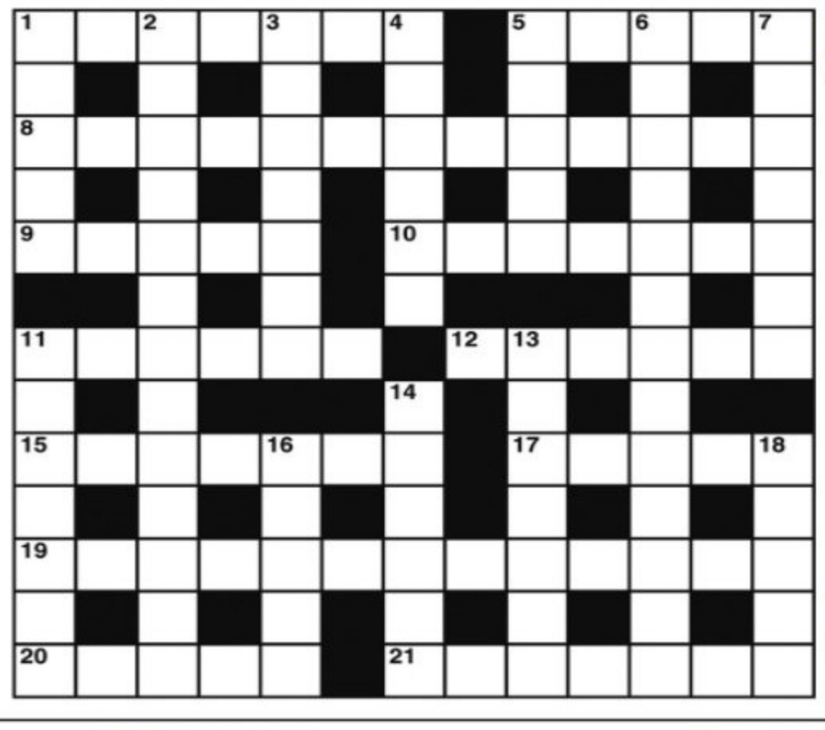
	8		6	3			5	
	3			9				
9	1		5		4			
		7			6	1	2	
1				2				5
	4	3	9			8		
			8		2		3	1
				5			9	
	5			4	9		7	

6	7	9	3	4	5	8	2	1
3	5	4	1	2	8	7	6	9
8	2	1	7	6	9	4	5	3
4	1	3	5	7	2	9	8	6
5	6	2	9	8	4	1	3	7
9	8	7	6	1	3	5	4	2
2	9	8	4	3	7	6	1	5
7	3	6	8	5	1	2	9	4
1	4	5	2	9	6	3	7	8

SUDOKU MEDIUM

TEST YOUR NUMBER CRUNCHING SKILL WITH OUR UNIQUE PUZZLE

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3X3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



CROSS WORD

ACROSS
1 Dickensian school-master feeling unwell on board (7)
5 Extra good in France and North America (5)
8 Big city landlord starts a sentence (7,6)
9 It gives one personal backing and support (5)
10 Cooked me instead! (7)
11 Throws stones in attacks (6)
12 A break gives us a hit (6)
15 Angered by anagram (7)
17 A view first seen in Virginia (5)
19 Made fearfully late? (6,2,5)
20 Cadet badly behaved (5)
21 Rectify - a bad habit? (7)

DOWN
1 They are used for holding coal fires (5)
2 Employee who gains nothing by waiting? (6,7)
3 Beg for a free show to follow in French (7)
4 Soda water display (6)
5 Always uplifted after a key note (5)
6 Very busy explaining what the Reign of Terror was? (2,4,2,5)
7 Takes steps not to have to walk in the streets (7)
11 Prospect following land clearance (4,3)
13 Was an unwanted visitor from abroad (7)
14 His leader has a point of view (6)
16 Agreed to lose a selfish characteristic (5)
18 Burned remains of trees? (5)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS

Across: 1 Death, 8 Handsome, 9 Rigid, 10 Contempt, 11 Ruins, 12 Off, 16 Pallid, 17 Enigma, 18 Den, 23 Screw, 24 Reporter, 25 Loose, 26 Slacking, 27 Weeds.

Down: 2 Epidural, 3 Triangle, 4 Pay-off, 5 Edith, 6 Dogma, 7 Berth, 12 Odd, 13 Fen, 14 Disclose, 15 Immersed, 19 Exeunt, 20 Brass, 21 Appal, 22 Broke.

JUMBLE

UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.

BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

TOPIA

RNOTF

FECFEO

RUYBRL

Today's Guest JUMBLER is
JULES RIVERA
artist for MARK TRAIL
WHOA! HE LEARNED NOT TO MESS WITH YOU!
11-18
WHEN MARK TRAIL STOPPED THE POACHER IN THE FOREST, HE FOUND OUT MARK WAS A ...
Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

©2023 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All Rights Reserved.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: JUICE ELDER DRIVER BASKET
Answer: The retail employee's on-the-job headaches were often — "JERK"-RELATED

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • JANUARY 16, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 18 • LATE CITY EDITION

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

24.8 cr people moved out of poverty in 9 yrs: NITI

As many as 24.82 crore people moved out of multidimensional poverty in nine years till 2022-23, with Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh registering the largest decline, Niti Aayog said in a report on Monday. According to the report, multidimensional poverty in India declined from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23, showing a reduction of 17.89 percentage points, with about 24.82 crore moving out of the bracket | P12

PASSENGER PUNCHES PILOT INSIDE AIRCRAFT

Unprecedented fog in five years leads to frayed tempers; flyer handed over to CISF

ASHISH SRIVASTAVA @ New Delhi

ANGERED by over 10-hour wait for the take-off, a passenger onboard an IndiGo flight punched the pilot while he was announcing the delay caused by foggy conditions. A video of the assault went viral.

The incident took place on the IndiGo 6E-2175 flight bound from Delhi to Goa on Sunday. It was delayed by over 10 hours due to the foggy weather.

Officials said the flight was scheduled to depart from Delhi at 7.40 am but eventually left at 6 pm. The assault took place around 1 pm. The passenger, identified as Sahil Kataria, was de-boarded after the incident and handed over to the Central Industrial Security Force.

The purported viral video showed Kataria, dressed in a yellow jacket, getting up from his seat, rushing up the aisle to where co-pilot Anup Kumar was making the announcement and hitting him, to the shock of the crew and other passengers.

In the short clip, other crew members could be seen shouting at the passenger after he hit the pilot. Kataria could also be heard saying that the passengers had been sitting in the plane for hours and that they should be allowed to get down if the flight could not take off.

A passenger hits an IndiGo pilot when he was making an announcement about the delay in take-off at Delhi airport | PTI

In another video clip, the passenger was seen being taken out of the aircraft by security personnel even as he "apologised" for his conduct.

Meanwhile, the pilot has filed a complaint against him at the IGI police station. A case under Sections 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint) and 290 (punishment for creating public nuisance) of the IPC and Section 22 of the Aircraft Rules has been registered against the passenger. However, since the sections registered against Kataria were bailable, he was released on bail.

Police said Katariya is a resident of southeast Delhi's Amar Colony and has a toy business. Meanwhile, a Russian model and actor claimed that she was on the flight and said passengers were livid due to the delay.

DGCA rules to tackle delays

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

WITH flights facing long delays amid adverse weather condition in Delhi, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Monday issued guidelines, asking the airlines to publish accurate real-time information on their flights and inform passengers through SMS/WhatsApp and email.

The DGCA guidelines came hours after Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia stepped in to ease the situation. He also requested the passengers to be patient during adverse weather conditions. Scindia asked the Delhi Airport to expedite the operationalization of the CAT III-enabled 4th runway.

Meanwhile, Delhi International Airport (DIAL) CEO Videh Jaipuriar said the visibility was reduced to such an extent that the CAT-IIIB norms turned ineffective on Sunday, resulting in delays.

"For four hours on Sunday morning we had zero visibility. So, whatever facility you have, in this kind of natural phenomenon, you cannot handle flight movement because nobody would take chances on safety," Jaipuriar told this newspaper. He also attributed the delays to a shortage of CAT-IIIB-compliant pilots who are trained to fly in low visibility.

EAM in Iran, Chabahar port back on talk table

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held wide-ranging talks with Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdollahain on Monday and discussed a framework for India's involvement with the strategically vital Chabahar port and the North-South connectivity project.

In a joint presser, Jaishankar expressed concern over the threats to maritime security in the region. Abdollahain, also reaffirmed that it was important to provide security in international waterways.

"There has been recently a perceptible increase in threats to the safety of maritime commercial traffic in this important part of the Indian Ocean. We have seen some attacks in the vicinity of India. This is a matter of great concern to the international community. It also has a direct bearing on India's energy and economic interests. This situation is not to the benefit of any party and this must be clearly recognised," said Jaishankar.

Jaishankar also called on Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and conveyed PM Modi's greetings. "Our bilateral discussion focused on the long-term framework for India's involvement with Chabahar port and the INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor, a 7,200-km long multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road route for moving freight involving India, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe)," said Jaishankar in a post on X after meeting the Iranian counterpart.

The two sides reviewed all aspects of the bilateral engagement comprehensively, he said.

404 RUNS

Prakar beats Yuvi record

Karnataka batsman Prakar Chaturvedi creates history by smashing the earlier record of Yuvaraj Singh by scoring an unbeaten 404 runs in the Under-19 Cooch Behar Cricket tournament finals | P13

Maya to go it alone, but open to post-poll pact

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

BSP chief Mayawati said on Monday that her party would go it alone in Lok Sabha polls. Acknowledging that she has received an invite for the Ram temple consecration on January 22, she said she was yet to decide on her participation.

In a statement issued on her 68th birthday, the BSP chief said with people's support, especially backward communities, Dalits, tribals, Muslims and other religious minorities, she had formed a majority government in UP in 2007. "So, we have decided to contest the Lok Sabha polls alone. We will maintain equidistance between those who are casteist and those who believe in communalism. We will work with all our might to help the BSP get a good result in the elections," said the former UP CM.

She blamed EVM "cheating" for the party's poor results in past few elections. P10

Mys sculptor's Ram Lalla is the chosen one

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

SHRI Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on Monday announced that the Ram Lalla idol sculpted by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj has been selected for installation at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

The trust had shortlisted three idols for installation in Ayodhya. A week ago, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and Yogiraj's family members confirmed about the selection. However, the trust clarified that it had only shortlisted three idols and had not finalised Yogiraj's work.

Finally, the trust announced its decision on the day of Sankranti, putting to rest all speculations over the selection of Ram Lalla.

A team led by Yogiraj carved the idol using Krishna shila.

State budget in February, says Siddu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hubballi

IN view of the possibility of the code of conduct for Lok Sabha elections coming into force early this March, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Monday that the state budget will be presented in February.

The announcement at Haveri assumes significance as the government has started holding budget consultations with departments and groups.

He said the government has started transferring Rs 2,000 per hectare as interim drought relief to the bank accounts of farmers. Once the state gets aid from the union government, compensation will be given to the affected farmers as per NDRF norms, he added.

ಶ್ರೀ ಸಿದ್ದರಾಮಯ್ಯ
ಸನ್ಮಾನ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು

ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಭಾರತ್ ಗೌರವ್ ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ಯಾತ್ರಾ

ರಾಮೇಶ್ವರ – ಕನ್ಯಾಕುಮಾರಿ – ಮದುರೈ – ತಿರುವನಂತಪುರಂ

ಯಾತ್ರಾರಂಭ : 18-01-2024 ರಿಂದ ಐಆರ್‌ಸಿಟಿಸಿ / ಐಟಿಎಂಎಸ್ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಬುಕ್ಕಿಂಗ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳಿ

ಸಹಾಯಧನ: ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದಿಂದ ಪ್ರತಿ ಯಾತ್ರಾರ್ಥಿಗೆ ರೂ.5,000/-

ಯೋಜನೆಯ ವೈಶಿಷ್ಟ್ಯತೆಗಳು:

ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ವೆಚ್ಚದಲ್ಲಿ

ರಾಮೇಶ್ವರ - ರಾಮೇಶ್ವರ ದೇವಾಲಯ
ಕನ್ಯಾಕುಮಾರಿ - ಶ್ರೀ ಭಗವತಿ ದೇವಾಲಯ
ಮದುರೈ - ಶ್ರೀ ಮೀನಾಕ್ಷಿ ದೇವಾಲಯ ಮತ್ತು
ತಿರುವನಂತಪುರಂ - ಶ್ರೀ ಅನಂತಪದ್ಮನಾಭ ಸ್ವಾಮಿ ದೇವಾಲಯಗಳ ದರ್ಶನ

ಯಾತ್ರೆಯ ಒಟ್ಟು ಪ್ಯಾಕೇಜ್ ಮೊತ್ತ : ರೂ.15,000/-
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದಿಂದ ಸಹಾಯಧನ : ರೂ. 5,000/-
ಯಾತ್ರಿಕರು ಪಾವತಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ಮೊತ್ತ : ರೂ.10,000/- ಮಾತ್ರ

6 ದಿನಗಳ ಯಾತ್ರೆ ಇದಾಗಿದ್ದು, 3 ಟೈರ್ ಎ.ಸಿ. ರೈಲು ಪ್ರಯಾಣ, ತಂಡಿ-ಊಟ, ವಸತಿ ಮತ್ತು ದರ್ಶನ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಒಳಗೊಂಡಿದೆ.

ಯಾತ್ರಾರ್ಥಿಗಳ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಹಾಗೂ ಕ್ಷೇಮಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯಿಂದ ವೈದ್ಯಕೀಯ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸಿದೆ.

ರೈಲು ಹತ್ತುವ ಹಾಗೂ ಇಳಿಯುವ ನಿಲ್ದಾಣಗಳ ವಿವರ

ಬೆಳಗಾವಿ ಹುಬ್ಬಳ್ಳಿ ಬೀರೂರು ತುಮಕೂರು ಹಾವೇರಿ ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ ಯಶವಂತಪುರ

ವಿಶೇಷ ರೈಲು ಹೊರಡಲಿರುವ ದಿನಾಂಕಗಳು

ನಿರ್ಗಮನ 18.01.2024 — ಆಗಮನ 23.01.2024
ನಿರ್ಗಮನ 30.01.2024 — ಆಗಮನ 04.02.2024

ಮಾನ್ಯ ಉಪ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳಾದ ಶ್ರೀ ಡಿ.ಕೆ. ಶಿವಕುಮಾರ್ ರವರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಮಾನ್ಯ ಸಾರಿಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಮುಜರಾಯಿ ಸಚಿವರಾದ ಶ್ರೀ ರಾಮಲಿಂಗಾರೆಡ್ಡಿರವರು ಸಭೆ ನಡೆಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ದೃಶ್ಯ

ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಇಲಾಖಾ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯ ದೇವಾಲಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಹುಂಡಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಇತರೆ ಮೂಲಗಳಿಂದ ಬರುವ ಆದಾಯವನ್ನು ಆಯಾಯಾ ದೇವಾಲಯಗಳ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗೆ ಉಪಯೋಗಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.

ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿ ವೇತನ

ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಇಲಾಖಾ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬರುವ ಅಧಿಸೂಚಿತ ದೇವಾಲಯ/ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ಅರ್ಚಕರು/ನೌಕರರ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯಾಭ್ಯಾಸಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹ ಧನವನ್ನು ವಿತರಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು. ಈ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಅರ್ಜಿಗಳನ್ನು ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದು ಅರ್ಹ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಅರ್ಜಿಯನ್ನು ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ತಹಶೀಲ್ದಾರ್ ರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಮುಜರಾಯಿ ಶಾಖೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಕಛೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ದಿನಾಂಕ 31-01-2024ರ ಒಳಗೆ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

ಪದವಿ ಪೂರ್ವ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ (ಪಿ.ಯು.ಸಿ)	ರೂ.5,000/-
ಐ.ಟಿ.ಐ/ಜೆ ಒ ಸಿ/ಡಿಪ್ಲೋಮ	ರೂ.5,000/-
ಪದವಿ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ	ರೂ.7,000/-
ಸ್ನಾತಕೋತ್ತರ ಪದವಿ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ	ರೂ.15,000/-
ಇತರೆ ವೈದ್ಯಕೀಯ ಕೋರ್ಸ್‌ಗಳು (ಆಯುರ್ವೇದಿಕ್, ಹೋಮಿಯೋಪತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಯುನಾನಿ)	ರೂ.25,000/-
ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ (ಇಂಜಿನಿಯರಿಂಗ್)	ರೂ.25,000/-
ವೈದ್ಯಕೀಯ / ಡೆಂಟಲ್ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ	ರೂ.50,000/-
ವಿದೇಶ ವ್ಯಾಸಂಗ	ರೂ.1,00,000/- (ಒಂದು ಬಾರಿ ಮಾತ್ರ)

ಮರಣ ಹೊಂದಿದ ಅರ್ಚಕರ / ನೌಕರರ ಕುಟುಂಬಕ್ಕೆ ಸೇವಾ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಧನ

ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಇಲಾಖಾ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬರುವ ಅಧಿಸೂಚಿತ ದೇವಾಲಯ/ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ಅರ್ಚಕರು/ನೌಕರರು ಮೃತಪಟ್ಟಲ್ಲಿ ಮೃತರ ಕುಟುಂಬಕ್ಕೆ ರೂ.2.00 ಲಕ್ಷ ಪರಿಹಾರವನ್ನು ನೀಡಲು ಆದೇಶಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಅರ್ಜಿಯನ್ನು ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ತಹಶೀಲ್ದಾರ್ ರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಮುಜರಾಯಿ ಶಾಖೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಕಛೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

ವಸತಿ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ ಸಹಾಯಧನ

ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಹಾಗೂ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ವಿವಿಧ ವಸತಿ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳ ಅಡಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಆಯ್ಕೆಯಾಗುವ 'ಸಿ' ವರ್ಗದ ದೇವಾಲಯಗಳ ಅರ್ಚಕರು ಹಾಗೂ ನೌಕರರು ಪಾವತಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ವಂತಿಗೆಯನ್ನು ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ಸಂಗ್ರಹಣಾ ನಿಧಿಯಿಂದ ಭರಿಸಿ ಪಾವತಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು. ಅರ್ಹ ಫಲಾನುಭವಿಗಳು ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಮುಜರಾಯಿ ಶಾಖೆ ಅಥವಾ ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಆಯುಕ್ತರ ಕಛೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಮ್ಮ ಅರ್ಜಿಗಳನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

ಅರ್ಚಕರು/ ನೌಕರರಿಗೆ ಯಾತ್ರಾ ಸ್ಥಳ ದರ್ಶನ

ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಇಲಾಖಾ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬರುವ ಪ್ರವರ್ಗ 'ಸಿ' ಅಧಿಸೂಚಿತ ದೇವಾಲಯ / ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ಅರ್ಚಕರು / ನೌಕರರನ್ನು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಭಾರತ್ ಗೌರವ್ ಕಾಶಿ-ಗಯಾ ದರ್ಶನ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಭಾರತ್ ಗೌರವ್ ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ಯಾತ್ರೆ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕವಾಗಿ ಗರಿಷ್ಠ 1200 ಜನ ಅರ್ಚಕರು/ನೌಕರರು ಮತ್ತು ಅವರ ಕುಟುಂಬದ ಒಬ್ಬ ಸದಸ್ಯರನ್ನು ಉಚಿತವಾಗಿ ಯಾತ್ರೆಗೆ ಕಳುಹಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಯಾತ್ರೆಗೆ ಹೋಗಬಯಸುವವರು ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಮುಜರಾಯಿ ಶಾಖೆ ಅಥವಾ ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಆಯುಕ್ತರ ಕಛೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಮ್ಮ ಹೆಸರುಗಳನ್ನು ಮುಂಚಿತವಾಗಿ ನೋಂದಾಯಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದು.

ಮಾಂಗಲ್ಯ ಭಾಗ್ಯ

ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ದತ್ತಿ ಇಲಾಖಾ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬರುವ ಪ್ರವರ್ಗ 'ಎ' ಮತ್ತು 'ಬಿ' ಅಧಿಸೂಚಿತ ದೇವಾಲಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ "ಮಾಂಗಲ್ಯ ಭಾಗ್ಯ" ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ ಸಾಮೂಹಿಕ ವಿವಾಹಗಳನ್ನು ಆಯೋಜಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ ವಧು-ವರರಿಗೆ ರೂ.55,000/-ಗಳ ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹ ಧನವನ್ನು ಆಯಾಯ ದೇವಾಲಯಗಳ ನಿಧಿಯಿಂದ ಪಾವತಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು. ಆದಾಯ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಇರುವ ದೇವಾಲಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸದರಿ ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹ ಧನವನ್ನು ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ಸಂಗ್ರಹಣಾ ನಿಧಿಯಿಂದ ನೀಡಲಾಗುವುದು ಆದ್ದರಿಂದ ಅರ್ಜಿರಿರುವವರು ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳನ್ನು ಅಥವಾ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಕಛೇರಿಯ ಮುಜರಾಯಿ ಶಾಖೆಯನ್ನು ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

Book your tickets online at https://www.irctctourism.com - For booking please contact: +91 8595931291, 8595931292, 8595931294

Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment A Narayanaswamy on Monday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has come out with policies that will directly reach and benefit Adivasis and it will give a fillip to their economic empowerment

BSY, RIVAL CAMP SHADOWBOX OVER TUMAKURU LS CANDIDATE

Names of Madhuswamy, Shobha, Somanna come up; High command to take call by Jan-end

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @Bengaluru:

SHADOWBOXING between former CM B S Yediyurappa and his rivals within the BJP has resulted in Tumakuru MP G S Basavaraju opposing the former on the choice of candidate for Tumakuru Lok Sabha seat.

Yediyurappa has been backing former minister JC Madhuswamy, while Basavaraju is opposing him. Originally from the Congress, Basavaraju (82) is unlikely to get the BJP ticket, and is lobbying for former minister V Somanna as his successor. But with the BJP high command suggesting to Somanna not to contest the parliamentary polls, Basavaraju is feeling letdown, say sources.

"In a ploy to checkmate Madhuswamy, Basavaraju floated the name of Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje from Tumakuru LS seat, as she may have to give up Udupi-Chikkamagaluru seat due to anti-incumbency. Yediyurappa's son and state BJP chief BY Vijayendra also wants Madhuswamy as the party candidate.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka calls on BJP national president JP Nadda in New Delhi on Monday. BJP leader V Somanna had also met Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the national capital, a couple of days ago.

"If the ticket is given to Madhuswamy, the results could be unpredictable as the people will not accept an egotistic person like him. He has already paid the price for it in the assembly polls," Basavaraju remarked. He said that he would speak to Amit Shah about Tumakuru LS ticket and explain the ground reality to him.

It may be noted that Shobha Karandlaje appears to have lost touch with the electorate in Udupi-Chikkamagaluru seat, and former minister Pramod Madhwaraj, who switched to the BJP from Congress, has started campaigning as the party candidate.

Shobha criticised Basavaraju for issuing a statement that would damage her image in Udupi-Chikkamagaluru. She clarified that she is most likely to contest from the same seat she won twice, in 2014 and 2019, owing to the Modi wave. "Udupi-Chikkamagaluru is a key seat with the RSS and BJP having a strong base here. Pramod, who is from the Congress, is unlikely to get the BJP ticket," a source informed *TNIE*.

Somanna looks at RS seat

V Somanna, who is unlikely to contest the Lok Sabha polls, on Monday said he has appealed to BJP leaders to nominate him as a Rajya Sabha (RS) member, and also give him the task of ensuring the victory of BJP candidates in three Lok Sabha seats.

Somanna was sulking after BY Vijayendra was appointed BJP state chief, and had met BJP national president JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the national capital a couple of days ago. His issue is that Yediyurappa and Vijayendra allegedly did not help him in Varuna and Chamarajanagar assembly seats, and he lost. "High command leaders have responded positively, and the issue had a happy ending. They will come to the state by the end of January. I have sought a Rajya Sabha nomination and will get BJP candidates elected in the three toughest LS seats," he said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah participates in the sixth Sharana Culture Festival of Shri Nijasharana Ambigara Chowdaiah in Haveri district on Monday | EXPRESS

CM: Committed to ensure justice for gangrape survivor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Hubballi

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday indirectly admitted that shifting of the Hangal gangrape survivor from the destitute home to her village in Uttar Kannada was wrong, and assured that corrective measures would be taken after consultation with the concerned people.

When Siddaramaiah was asked about providing treatment to the accused in the case while allegedly denying the same to the survivor, he expressed innocence, and stated, "I will look into the matter. After discussing with former minister Basavaraj Shivannavar, I will take corrective measures."

Brushing aside allegations levelled by the BJP leaders against the state government that it was covering up the gangrape case and watering it down, the chief minister said there would be no question of hushing up the case and none of the accused would be spared. Moreover, his government would not allow anybody to take the law in their hands, irrespective of the religion or caste they belong to, he told reporters at Haveri on Monday.

Denouncing the BJP's demand for a probe by a special investigation team (SIT), Siddaramaiah shot back: "Aren't the police part of the SIT? It cannot be decided based on a demand by former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai." He, however, quickly added that the decision on forming the SIT could be taken depending on the outcome the preliminary investigation. He stressed that the government was committed to taking action as per the law.

Responding to the allegation that the government response to moral policing was meek and none of those responsible in the government were coming hard on the issue, he said the government believed in taking action as per the law rather than giving verbal assurances. Moreover, the government was sympathetic to the family of the survivor. While visiting the survivor was one part of the action taken by the government, another part was to ensure that justice is delivered, he added. When asked about offering compensation to the victim, the CM said that a request has been submitted only now and a decision would be taken after discussing it at the government level.

Dr CN Manjunath to be pitched as JDS Lok Sabha candidate?

BANSY KALAPPA @Bengaluru

THE name of **Dr CN Manjunath**, celebrated cardiologist and director of Jayadeva Hospital for over two decades, is doing the rounds as a probable candidate for Hassan or Bangalore Rural seat.

Dr Cholenahalli Nanjappa Manjunath (66) superannuated as director of Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, and is on an extended tenure. The previous Siddaramaiah government and BJP government gave him extensions, and his term comes to a close on January 31.

Medical circles hold him in high regard for his role in a surgical procedure, balloon mitral valvuloplasty, and he has been credited with performing the maximum procedures using Accura balloon catheter. He received the Padma Shri in 2007. Politically speaking, he is the brother of CN Balakrishna, JDS MLA from Shravanabelagola. His wife Anasuya is the eldest daughter of former PM HD Deve Gowda. Party sources claim that Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna may find it difficult to win this time, and suggested that Manjunath's name could be pitched for the family fiefdom.

The family already has one MLA, one MLC and one Lok Sabha MP, while Bhavani was a ZP member and an aspirant for KR Nagar seat. Party sources also speak of the fragile relationship between the brothers – former CM HD Kumaraswamy and his older brother HD Revanna. When contacted, Dr Manjunath said he is not considering a political career, though sources said the Gowda family decision would prevail.

IN GOD WE TRUST

Prajwal and Suraj Revanna, grandsons of JDS supremo HD Deve Gowda, during their visit to the Sri Ayyappa Temple in Sabarimala, on the occasion of Makara Sankranti on Monday. The brothers visited the holy place ahead of the General Election, on the advice of their family priest | EXPRESS

POLL WALL: BJP'S MEGA INITIATIVE TO WOO VOTERS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka BJP on Monday initiated a wall-writing exercise across the state ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. BJP state president BY Vijayendra, who took up the programme in Bengaluru, said that they are focus on five locations in each booth till January 25.

Speaking to reporters after taking part in the wall-writing initiative at Seshadripuram on Monday, Vijayendra said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set out on a mission to make India 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, and the people of India are supporting him in this endeavour.

Further, Vijayendra informed that the initiative was undertaken as per instruction from BJP national president JP Nadda. "Through this, we are planning to reach out to people with PM Modi's pro-people schemes," he said.

> **Through this, we are planning to reach out to people with PM Modi's pro-people schemes**
>
> BY Vijeyendra, BJP state chief

Referring to the gangrape in Haveri, Vijayendra said he does not want to politicise this issue. "Ever since, the Congress came to power, such cases are happening frequently. There was an assualt on a woman in Belagavi, and now in Haveri. The police seem to be least bothered even days after the incident in Belagavi. They were even trying to cover up the Haveri incident, which is condemnable. Women are not safe in Karnataka. We have sought the formation of an SIT, but the government seems to have taken the matter lightly," he said.

BJP state chief BY Vijayendra gives finishing touches to a painting of PM Narendra Modi on a wall in Seshadripuram, Bengaluru, on Monday | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

Hegde must take care of his health: DKS

ENS @ Bengaluru

SLAMMING BJP MP Ananthkumar Hegde for his recent controversial remarks, Deputy CM **DK Shivakumar** replied by saying "those who are mentally stable will not speak like him (Hegde)".

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Shivakumar said no one with a sane mind will talk like that. "It is a good thing that his leaders have understood what he said was wrong. Ananthkumar Hegde has to take care of his health," he said.

Meanwhile, the official X handle of Karnataka Congress also slammed Hegde. In a post on X, the party stated, "Hegde is like Kumbhakarna. Sleeping for four and a half years, waking up when the election comes." It also alleged that Hegde continues the legacy of a mentality that does not tolerate the social, economic and political prosperity of Dalits and backward communities. "Such people are like a cancer in this country," it stated, adding that Kannadigas will teach him a lesson.

Meanwhile, BJP state president BY Vijayendra said the statement made by Hegde was his own, and "It has nothing to do with the party".

POLITICAL THEATRE

Sudhakar meets HDK, ready to contest from CB Pura

BENGALURU: Former minister Dr K Sudhakar called on former CM and JDS chief HD Kumaraswamy at the latter's farmhouse in Bidadi on Monday. He discussed the Chikkaballapura Lok Sabha seat and expressed his willingness to be the BJP-JDS alliance candidate, according to sources. He had lost the Assembly polls from Chikkaballapura constituency to Congress' novice Pradeep Eshwar. The JDS, which has sought 3-4 seats as part of the alliance, is likely to seek Chikkaballapura LS seat where it has a base with a sizable Vokkaliga population. The BJP-JDS alliance sees a chance to win the seat, hence, Sudhakar wants to become the candidate, sources said.

Cong leaders to meet on Jan 19 to pick candidates for LS polls

BENGALURU: Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday said a meeting of the Lok Sabha Pradesh Election Committee (PEC) will be held on January 19 in Bengaluru, which will be followed by a party workers' convention slated to be held on January 21 in Mangaluru. Speaking to reporters, Shivakumar informed that the Congress observers from Delhi will take part in the PEC and discuss the list of potential candidates submitted by the respective ministers, who were given the task of shortlisting the candidates in 28 LS seats. The concerned district-in-charge ministers will also take part in the meeting, as candidates need to be finalised as early as possible, he added.

Psephologist Premchand Palety files defamation case

BENGALURU: Premchand Palety, founder of C Fore -- who did the election survey for Congress in Karnataka, in 2013 and 2018, and for Asianet News in Kerala in 2016 and 2021 -- has filed a defamation case. Palety filed the case against Dilip Thakore and DT Media and Entertainment Pvt Ltd -- publishers of Education World -- seeking damages and perpetual injunction against publication of a defamatory public notice via email dated Jan 4, 2024, against him. The matter was taken up for hearing on January 10 and the court passed an ad-interim injunction order dated Jan 10 in I.A. No.58 of 2024 in O.S No.14 of 2024, restraining the defendants from publishing any defamatory content against him.

WAVES OF DELAY

Houthi attacks on Red Sea hits cashew exports from Dakshina Kannada

DIVYA CUTINHO @Mangaluru

THE impending crisis following attacks on ships on the Red Sea by Houthi rebels, who control large parts of Yemen, in solidarity with Gaza, has affected the cashew industry. There are around 250 cashew industries in Dakshina Kannada, and the district exports around 5,800 tonnes of cashew kernels per annum. It produces 2,45,000 tonnes per annum of cashewnuts.

Kalbavi Prakash Rao, Karnataka Cashew Manufacturers' Association (KCMA) past president, managing director of Mangaluru-based Kalbavi Consumer Foods Pvt Ltd, and one of the importers of break-bulk raw cashew, said they are engaged in import-export business to Africa, Europe and US via sea, using the Red Sea channel and Suez canal. However, he said that due to the Red Sea crisis, vessels are now forced to take longer routes via Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, and travel all the way to Europe over an additional 6,300 nautical miles and 15 extra days of ocean travel.

A woman works at the Kalbavi cashew factory in Mangaluru | EXPRESS

"Cashew exporters from Dakshina Kannada are affected as there is a steep hike in ocean freight by over $2000 per container, and more than 19,000 vessels are stuck in the safe waters of the Red Sea, due to which there might be a huge delay in cargo reaching its destination. It has already resulted in shortage of containers and port congestion due to the sudden arrival of ships," he said.

Imports are not much impacted as most of them are from East and West Africa, below the Red Sea. What is most worrying for the cashew industry is that during Covid, there was a major disruption in shipping logistics. It took almost one-and-half years to return to normal. There was a shortage of containers, and the cost of freight had gone up.

"The Houthis' war has resulted in vessels being unable to keep schedules and taking 15 to 20 days to reach ports, hence we foresee disruption in logistics services again. Though there is no direct impact right now, gradually, prices will increase and there will be a shortage of containers. This issue is on international waters and the US is intervening. Unless this war ends, we are not seeing an end to this problem. It is impacting our exports but over time, with overall increase in freight tariff, it will also impact our imports. Oil prices are going up due to which freight charges will also go up," added Kalbavi.

Break-bulk cargo the answer?

Cashew manufacturers are contemplating using break-bulk vessels where three to four exporters join up and bring break-bulk cargo.

"We hired a ship and brought a break-bulk cargo container from Tanzania a few days ago. However, there is a lot of risk involved in such operations as we don't use regular shipping lines. We are taking the risk to keep factories open and supplies in," said Kalbavi.

Ernakulam Rural police arrested 19-yr-old Dheeraj, a native of Cherai, on Monday for allegedly assaulting a man using nunjacku, a martial art training equipment. The police said that animosity between the two led to the incident. Mohan, who suffered head injuries, is stable and undergoing treatment

PM'S 2ND ROADSHOW IN KERALA IN 15 DAYS

Roadshow to cover 1.3km; 50,000 party workers to assemble; Modi to visit Guruvayur temple

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

TWO weeks after a massive women's rally and roadshow in Thrissur, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive in Kerala on a two-day visit to the state on Tuesday. He will hold a roadshow in Kochi on the first day and address a conference of BJP Sakthi Kendra Pramukhs in the city the next day. Providing a big impetus to Kerala's infrastructure sector, the Prime Minister will also inaugurate three projects worth Rs 4,000 crore.

The PM is expected to arrive at Kochi airport at 5pm on Tuesday. He will proceed to INS Garuda, the Naval Air Base in Kochi, on a helicopter. At 6pm, he will hold a roadshow from the Maharaja's College Ground to Ernakulam Government Guest House. The roadshow will proceed through Hospital Road and Park Avenue Road, covering a distance of 1.3km, and will conclude at the Guest House, where the Prime Minister will stay. BJP said around 50,000 party workers will assemble in the city to witness the roadshow.

On Wednesday, Modi will leave for Guruvayur on a helicopter at 6.30am to attend the marriage of actor-politician Suresh Gopi's daughter at 6.30am. The Prime Minister is expected to reach Guruvayur by 7.30am. After the marriage function, he will proceed to Triprayar and offer prayers at Sri Rama Temple at 10.30am. Modi will return to Kochi by noon and inaugurate three projects at Willingdon Island. After the function, he will reach Marine Drive and address a meeting of the BJP Sakthi Kendra Pramukhs. The meeting has been arranged to motivate party workers at the grassroots level to start preparations for the Lok Sabha elections. He will return to Delhi after lunch.

NDA padayatra on Jan 27

A meeting of the NDA held in Kochi on Monday decided to organise a 27-day 'Padayatra' from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram, highlighting the achievements of the Narendra Modi-led government. The Padayatra, led by BJP state president K Surendran, will be inaugurated by BJP national president J P Nadda on January 27. Around 25,000 party workers will join the procession in each Lok Sabha constituency.

After Modi, Kharge charting plans to woo Thrissur

T'Puram: With Prime Minister Narendra Modi charting visits to Thrissur in quick succession, Congress leadership is also setting in motion efforts to retain its vote base in the constituency. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is slated to attend a public programme at the Thekkinkadu Maidan on February 4. The visit will also see him holding talks with booth agents. The BJP state leadership is leaving no stone unturned to make inroads into the Thrissur electorate, for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. They are expected to field actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi from the constituency. On January 3, Modi held a road-show in the city and attended a women's public meeting at Thekkinkadu Maidan, in an effort to reach out to women voters. Modi is scheduled to arrive in Thrissur, on Wednesday, to attend the wedding of Suresh Gopi's daughter at the Guruvayur temple. Not to be left behind in the race for the Thrissur Lok Sabha seat, Congress will kick off their election campaign with the February 4 event which will see 75,000 activists from 25,177 booths attending the mega conclave. It will have participation from the mandalam committees to the national leadership.

Modi to inaugurate NACIN in Andhra

Amaravati: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also scheduled to visit Palasamudram in Andhra Pradesh's Sri Satyasai district on Tuesday and inaugurate the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) institute. Modi will reach Palasamudram on Tuesday afternoon to participate in the scheduled programmes and return in the evening, according to a press release. Following the inauguration, Modi will visit the first floor of NACIN to view the Antiquities Smuggling Centre, Narcotics Study Centre and Wildlife Crime Detection Centre. Later, he will also interact with some trainee officers and release a book titled 'Flora of Palasamudram'. Before his departure to Delhi, Modi is also expected to visit Lepakshi Temple. Chief Secretary K S Jawahar Reddy, who directed officials to make arrangements for the successful visit of the PM, has reviewed the preparations. Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy are also expected to attend Modi's programme.

Maternal filicide needs more research in India

BALA CHAUHAN @Bengaluru

SUCHANA Seth (39), CEO of a Bengaluru-based startup 'Mindful AI Lab', was arrested on January 8 from Chitradurga district for allegedly killing her minor son in a service apartment in North Goa. Seth has consistently denied indulging in maternal filicide. The Goa police have sought professional help from psychiatrists to question Seth. She has been charged under concerned sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for murder (302) and destruction of evidence (201), besides the Goa Children's Act. The children's court in Goa on Monday extended her police custody by another five days.

Maternal filicide, an extremely disturbing homicide, is defined as the act of a mother killing her own offspring who is one-year-old or more. According to research, its occurrence is "rare, varying between 0.6-2.1 per 1,00,000 children under the 15-year age group". Though maternal filicide is not new, it is not well documented or researched in India largely because of a lack of adequate number of forensic psychiatry centres and forensic psychiatrists.

In one of the first systematic descriptions on maternal filicide in the country, a team of psychiatrists from the National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences (Nimhans) had published a paper in the 'Asian Journal of Psychiatry' in August 2018, in which they had presented findings from a case series of four women inpatients, who were undergoing trial for filicide. All women had reported severe marital discord and poor social support. The authors in the paper 'Maternal filicide: A case series from a medico-legal psychiatry unit in India' stated that filicide is a "multifaceted, multifactorial and multidimensional (socio-psychological-legal) act. Along with psychiatric disorders such as severe depression, the women in our sample had seemingly insurmountable psychosocial difficulties, which are important risk factors".

The authors from Nimhans quoted well-known American psychiatrist Phillip Resnick, who in 1969 had classified filicide into five types based on 'motives' behind the act. These included "altruistic-filicide, where the parent kills the child keeping in mind the 'best interest of the child' and is the commonest. The second is psychotic-filicide, where a parent kills the child without any logical reasoning, under the effect of a severe psychotic experience. The third type is unwanted-child-filicide, where the child is viewed as a hindrance to parents' social benefits. The fourth type is the accidental-filicide, where parents do not have any motive behind filicide and this commonly follows severe neglect and abuse. The fifth type is the spouse-revenge-filicide, where one parent displaces anger towards the child secondary to ongoing severe marital discord, and jealousy".

They found "consistent associations with family stressors, including severe marital discord, jealousy, unemployment, illiteracy and poor social support, besides severe psychopathology such as ongoing major depressive episode, psychosis, subnormal intelligence, and substance use (as contributing factors behind maternal filicide)".

In cases of maternal filicide, "it is imperative to get the psychiatric assessment of the mother to ascertain the cause (of homicide), wherever resources are available", said Professor of Psychiatry Suresh Bada Math, in-charge, Head of Forensic Psychiatry, Nimhans. He has co-authored the paper on maternal filicide with Senior Professor of Psychiatry and Dean, Behavioural Science, Nimhans, Prabha Chandra and others.

SUCHANA TO BE PRODUCED IN COURT ON JANUARY 19

Belagavi: Children's court in Panaji extended the police custody of Suchana Seth, CEO of a Bengaluru based startup, by five days in connection with the murder of her 4 yr old son, which, she allegedly committed in a hotel in Goa last week. She will be produced to the court on January 19. Meanwhile, Suchana was confronted by her husband Venkat Raman in the Goa police station, and a brief argument took place between the two. A DNA test of Venkat Raman has been scheduled at Goa Medical College and Hospital on Tuesday. Sources said the reports of the tests conducted by Goa Medical College on Suchana would also be out on Wednesday. A psychiatrist doctor from the college has already tested Suchana and his report also is expected to be out on Wednesday.

File photo of Suchana Seth with her son

Four die in separate road accidents

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

FOUR people died in separate road accidents in the city since Sunday afternoon.

A 48-year-old man died after an auto hit his bike on Sunday afternoon. Police said the deceased, Chandrashekhar, a resident of Mahadeshwarnagar in Maruthi Nagar, was taking his children, aged 13 and 9, out for lunch. The incident took place when Chandrashekhar was heading from Peenya 2nd Stage towards Hegganahalli main road. Chandrashekhar fell on the road and was severely injured, while both children escaped narrowly. He was rushed to hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. Peenya traffic police registered a case.

In another accident in Devanahalli traffic police station limits, Nagesh, 20, a labourer and native of Nanded in Maharashtra, was hit by a bike when he was going for tea with his friends, on Ballari Road around 9.15 pm Sunday. He was rushed to a nearby hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

In Banaswadi traffic police limits, Melwin Joshua, 25, a software engineer, died after his car met with an accident. Police said he lost control of his car which collided with another car and a tree before crashing into a gate on CMR Road, around 2 am. Melwin sustained head injuries and was rushed to a hospital, where he died.

In yet another accident, Umang Bohra, 22, a resident of Bellandur who was working with a private firm, died after he lost control of his bike and fell on the Begur-Electronics City Road in the wee hours of Monday. Hulimavu traffic police registered a case.

PIC: SHAJI VETTIPURAM

Lakhs of devotees witness 'Makarajyothi'

SABARIMALA: Lakhs of pilgrims who had been camping in and around the Sabarimala temple for the past few days, witnessed the 'Makarajyothi' and 'Makaravilakku' in a spiritually surcharged atmosphere, on Monday. Devotees thronged the Sannidhanam and filled the atmosphere with 'sarana mantras' before getting a glimpse of the celestial star. Ten viewpoints were arranged at the temple which were packed with devotees waiting patiently for darshan.

IMA to help young docs get jobs abroad

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

WITH the number of medical graduates increasing every year and many not finding jobs, the country in general and Karnataka in particular, is all set to export doctors to many countries, according to Indian Medical Association (IMA).

Many unemployed doctors are trying for jobs abroad, but without any security. To address this issue, the IMA is working towards setting up a facilitation and information centre, according to Dr RV Asokan, IMA president.

Through the centre, the IMA will help doctors and other medical professionals get jobs abroad. The National Medical Association and the Overseas Medical Graduates' Association will be partners of this initiative. The IMA is also working with the National Employment Exchange for recruitment of medical professionals, Dr Asokan told TNIE.

According to the IMA, around 1,08,915 students graduate every year from 706 registered medical colleges. Of them, 40,000 will not be able to join MBBS and PG courses. "These 40,000 students enroll in coaching centres for NEET and other entrance tests for PG courses. There are around 1.2 lakh unemployed doctors in India. If they are given government jobs, it will be helpful to them," Dr Asokan said.

The IMA is also looking at the best innovative ways some states have adopted to employ doctors. Citing the example of Kerala, the IMA director said the state is offering incentives for PG students. It has started outreach programmes where doctors visit patients at home on a monthly basis.

The director said each state is being asked to come up with innovative ways of employing doctors and share them with the IMA.

A doctor working with a private hospital said, "The situation of young doctors is very bad. The young doctors are being harassed. They are made to work for long hours in private hospitals and are not paid well. They are now keen on working even in rural areas, but are not given much opportunities. They have no new fields or scopes here."

Murder accused's house set ablaze in cops' presence

PRAVEEN KUMAR @Bengaluru

PANIC gripped Gollahalli on Kanakapura road after unidentified miscreants set fire to the house of a murder accused.

The incident happened in the presence of police personnel attached to the District Armed Reserve and jurisdictional station. Police personnel were deployed at the murder accused's house in anticipation of a retaliatory attack from the family and relatives of the victim.

M Ravisha, 38, of Gollahalli was murdered by his cousin 40-year-old N Ravi Kumar alias 'Massage' Ravi, also from Gollahalli on Wednesday. Ravisha is alleged to have abused Ravi's mother under the influence of alcohol. Enraged by this, Ravi stabbed Ravisha with a knife. Ravisha was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead. Ravisha's family members vowed to avenge his murder.

Kodihalli police have arrested Ravi. The miscreants set fire to Ravi's house on Thursday night. An officer, who was part of police personnel deployed at the murder accused's house, filed a complaint on Friday with Kodihalli police.

Seven police personnel were guarding the house. The miscreants, who entered the compound of the house from behind, set fire to silkworm rearing trays made of bamboo. The fire then spread to the house.

The police personnel did not get any help from local people to douse the fire. A case of mischief by fire with explosive substances has been registered. "The murder case and the mischief by fire are linked. A search for the miscreants is on. Nobody was injured in the fire. The loss has been estimated around Rs 2 lakh," said a police officer. A case under Section 436 of the IPC has also been registered against the unidentified accused.

POT OF HAPPINESS

Children take part in the pongal making ceremony as part of the Makara Sankranti celebrations in Hubballi on Monday | PTI

Woman flung out of bus due to rash driving, dies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Mangaluru

AN elderly woman died after she was thrown out of a bus due to rash and negligent driving of a private bus driver. The incident occurred near Jokatte on the outskirts of Mangaluru city on Monday morning.

Eramma, a 65-year-old woman, was travelling with her daughter to Surathkal in a private bus. When the bus reached the service station near Jokatte Cross around 10am, the driver of the bus applied sudden brakes in a rash manner due to which Eramma who was sitting on the front seat beside the driver fell off from the bus.

Further, the rear wheel of the bus ran over Eramma, resulting in severe head injury killing her on the spot. Mangaluru traffic police have booked the driver of the bus Anil John Lobo for rash and negligent driving.

A case has been booked by Mangaluru Traffic North Police station.

EXPRESS READ

4 of a family killed as paddy harvester machine hits bike

Mysuru: Four people of a family, including two children, were killed in a head-on collision between a paddy harvester machine and a bike near Jenakanahalli in Kollegal taluk on Monday. The deceased are Santhosh (32), his wife Samya (27), kids Abhi (9) and Nityasakthi (4). Santhosh, his wife and children were on their way to a temple in Kollegal when the paddy harvester machine hit them and dragged bodies for 30 metres. People alleged that the harvester machine driver's negligence was the reason for the tragedy.

Hampi Utsav to showcase local talent

Hosapete: The much-awaited Hampi Utsav, scheduled to be held from February 2 to 5, will see the participation of artistes from undivided Ballari district in large numbers. Considered as one of the biggest cultural events of the state, Vijayanagara district administration has decided to give the platform mostly to local artistes. More than 55 local arts including drama and folk dances will be performed by local artistes at the event. Noted Kannada artistes and singers like Vijaya Prakash, Sadhu Kokila and Rajesh Krsihanna will also perform at the utsav.

Two students found dead under suspicious circumstances in US

Hyderabad: Two students - one from Wanaparthy in Telangana and another from Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh- were found dead in their Connecticut accommodation in the US recently, a family member said on Monday. The students were identified as G Dinesh (22) from Wanaparthy in Telangana and Nikesh (21) from Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh. "Dinesh's friends who live in a nearby room called us on Saturday night and informed us about his death and his roommate's," Dinesh's family members said.

Complex surgery gives man new lease of life

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

KIRAN Kumar, 49, who was suffering from extensive anterior wall myocardial infarction (MI), got a new lease of life after undergoing a complex heart transplant.

In May last year, when he visited BGS Gleneagles Hospital with complaints of chest pain and breathlessness, medical experts identified severe damage to his left ventricle and pulmonary edema, complicating his condition further with diabetes, early chronic liver disease and a blocked artery.

Despite undergoing primary percutaneous coronary angioplasty (PTCA) and receiving medication, Kumar's health deteriorated critically, as evidenced by a low left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF) of 15-20 per cent, said transplant surgeon Dr Balasubramani Govini.

In August, facing a rapidly declining quality of life, the option of a heart transplant was presented as a lifeline.

Embracing this opportunity, Kumar underwent a six-hour surgery on December 20. Within three hours, Kumar's heart was revived.

Dr Govini said that over 1 lakh suffer heart failure with a mere 200 heart transplants taking place in India, despite strong government support and insurance.

Our transplant numbers are remarkably low, he said, and underscored the need for change, urging improved organ donation and heightened public awareness.

Dr Ravindranath Reddy, HOD & senior consultant interventional cardiologist, said the days following the surgery saw Kumar gradually regaining strength under doctors' care, and eventually walking out of the hospital with renewed vitality.

EDITORIAL

The spirit of religious tolerance lay in shambles. However, from the ashes will one day arise the edifice of a harmonious India. Passion is momentary but compassion is more enduring

Madhu Dandavate

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Ramnath Goenka

POLICYMAKERS SHOULD NOT CHANGE FRAMEWORK OF BANKRUPTCY CODE

RESERVE Bank governor Shaktikanta Das recently reiterated that financial creditors should continue to get precedence over operational creditors in insolvency cases. Amid a lot of discontent with the way things have gone with India's new insolvency laws, the RBI governor reaffirming the primacy of financial creditors is a powerful reminder that policymakers under pressure should not tweak the law so much that it loses its basic character. Of late, there have been outcries over delays in resolution and a high level of haircuts that banks took in those cases. There have been complaints about step-brotherly treatment meted out to operational creditors such as vendors, suppliers, government departments and employees. These 'weaknesses' in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) had even pushed a parliamentary committee to suggest that the IBC should have a threshold over which banks should not take haircuts. There also were calls for balancing the rights of the operational and financial creditors. But such changes might render the IBC toothless.

The IBC's rules are still getting settled. It has seen some early success, with 16 percent of the cases admitted to the National Company Law Tribunal yielding resolution and 19 percent getting withdrawn after settlement. This means 35 percent of debt-ridden companies either saw new management taking over or old ones taking back control after paying off creditors. The fear of losing control led to defaulting promoters clearing off debt amounting to ₹9.33 lakh crore even before their companies were admitted under the code.

The IBC is a commercial law and should not be expected to follow the principles of natural justice. The framers of the code had seen the IBC as a financial creditor-led process because the stakes or risks of financial institutions are higher. The delays in resolution are not because the IBC is unfairly tilted towards financial creditors, but because adjudicating authorities continue to 'entertain' petitions from all stakeholders against the resolution. The recovery amounts are decided as per the commercial wisdom of the committee of financial creditors. Several court judgements, including by the Supreme Court, have reaffirmed the sanctity of the commercial wisdom of the committee of creditors. So while authorities should continue to tweak the rules to make the IBC more effective, they should leave the basic character intact.

INDIA SHOOTERS ON TARGET BUT OLYMPICS THE BIG TEST

CLICHÉD as it may sound, Indian shooting is bang on the target at the moment. The country's top shooters have accumulated a record number of quotas –17 as of now—for the Paris Olympics in July-August. With a few more quotas to be won (mostly in shotgun), India are now expected to reach 20. In pistol and rifle, India have managed to get 15 out of possible 16 quotas. China and the US, with 21 and 18, have bagged more quotas as of now. To put the numbers in perspective, India secured a then-unprecedented 15 quotas in Tokyo 2020. In Rio 2016, they had managed to clinch 12. Despite all the promise, there were no medals in both the Olympics. After Abhinav Bindra's historic gold in Beijing 2008, and silver and bronze by Vijay Kumar and Gagan Narang in London four years later, there had been a considerable dip in medals form. The number of slots booked this time is certainly encouraging.

This shows that the Indian shooters are not lacking in anything compared to that the best in the world. The domestic setup is producing world, World Cup and continental champions. The Asian Games return (a record 22 medals) this time was a testament to that. The 10m air rifle legacy of Bindra and Gagan is being carried forward by 20-year-old Rudrankksh Patil, the 2022 world champion. In pistols, if we once had Jitu Rai as world champion, we now have the promising Sarabjot Singh, 22.

Though the domestic circuit is abuzz, a lack of Olympic medals would be a big concern for administrators and coaches. Last Olympics, during the bubble drive due to Covid, things did not go according to the plan for the shooting team. They first went to Croatia for almost a month to train and then flew to Tokyo. There were internal issues among the coaching staff as well. The shooters seemed mentally exhausted by the time they reached Tokyo. There are six months to go for the next Olympics. The selection trials in May will decide who will represent India and with stiff competition expected in various categories. There is enough time for the shooting federation and the Sports Authority of India to plan. They will need to get back the Olympic medal-winning mentality. Otherwise, like winning, losing may also become a habit.

QUICK TAKE

PUSH FOR GAZA PEACE AT DAVOS

THE world's rich and powerful seem more worried about a second Trump presidency than Israel's genocide in Gaza. Geopolitical risks are front and centre on the minds of the global elite gathering at Davos for another World Economic Forum meet. They are trying to stop Russia's war—120 national security advisors are locked in a series of meetings to rally support for Ukraine's peace plan. On the table are discussions on AI and inflation, too. But not Gaza. If the elite want to avoid the North-South diplomatic divide from growing, they would do well to make a serious effort—in Davos and beyond—at stopping Israel's war.

Brands are becoming more similar in the era of artificial intelligence. Future differentiation will be driven by personalisation. Individuals will matter more than ever

THE BRAND IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE BRAND

HARISH BIJOOR

Brand guru and Founder, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc

SOURAV ROY

DO humans matter in the era of artificial intelligence? My quest into this question in the world of sales and marketing across countries led me to an intrusive consumer research exercise that had me exploring a 4,600-plus sample. I peeped into the life of the consumer as a user of goods and services—including consumer goods, durables, hospitality, telecom, newspapers, e-commerce and more. This time round, my research exercise covered urban and supra-urban markets alone.

Let me head straight to the results. The happy fact remains that people matter. Individuals with a real mind and body do matter, even in the era of AI. The happier fact is that data from certain categories of consumer interface seem to say that the only thing that matters is the human being. The customer relationship manager, the general manager of a hotel, the editor of a newspaper and the shopkeeper of your corner shop matter. They matter more than anything else, even today. And will matter more in the years to come, if my prognosis is correct.

People will matter more and more in some realms. They will be the cutting edge in sales and marketing interfaces. While every Tom, Dick and Harish is able to offer a superior product, a well-handled brand, and good PR and advertising, the one differential that will make it all cut through to a win is the human being. This time round, the human being is not at the back end; instead, he is the one who is at the front of it all.

The front face that you recognise at a hotel, that you look forward to interacting with again and again. This front face is incidentally not the junior trainee at the hotel check-in desk. Instead she is the general manager of the hotel who can be seen all around. She is somewhere around as you check in and she is out there at the breakfast restaurant mingling with guests. She just might be there as you check out to say goodbye and see if all went well. And none of these appearances are as casual as they seem. They are purposive attempts painstakingly curated to offer a seamless top-management front face and a name you can remember and look forward to.

Just like hotel customers love to interact with the general manager, readers of physical newspapers love to know the name of the editor. If not for that, they might as well be reading news out of a curation app—without a stance, without sensitivity even. The physical newspaper is, therefore. a reputation curated by the editor. The reader is with you when he knows the name of the editor, and the ethos and stance of the editor. The reader understands the tenor and decibel of the written word carefully presented by the editor. In many ways, a reader gravitates to a physical newspaper based on the editor and his reputation. Must a newspaper then proudly showcase the name of its editor on the masthead? Maybe a picture even? Is that a bleeding-edge way of adding personalisation and repute to the publication?

My research evidence tells me that the true differentiation will be made by personalisation efforts by the newspapers of the day. The brand is dead; long live the brand. The new brand—in the era of crass generalisation by the iron-box effect of AI—is the personalisation effort of hitherto mass brands. Do remember, everyone has a brand. The brand is, however, a point of equalisation today. It is a hygiene factor you cannot but have. It is the lowest common denominator differentiation.

The differentiation in the future will be made by personalisation. Individuals will matter more than ever. And that will be a highest common denominator differentiation. As of today, it is quite likely that the brand has robbed individuals of their sheen and value. In the future, individuals will rob the brand of its sheen. Brand sheen of newspapers will be added by the name of the editor more than anything or anyone else.

Let me take this train of thought triggered by my research onto Indian retail. Consumers today are tired of brands. They have become so common that there is no distinction between one and the other at all. When I walk in to buy a mobile phone, I have a set of branded outlets I walk into. I can walk into any of 15 branded retail outlets that stock mobile phones. All of them stock the same brands, have the same price levels, offer the same schemes on use of specific branded credit cards, and the service standards by and large are the same. So what do I do? I go to the one closest to me by distance. The brand of the retail outlet is dead, if it's not dying fast.

Let me jump onto e-commerce platforms. The same issue stares back at me. Every e-commerce platform offers the same in product, service, returns policy and price. How do I choose? Quite blindly. By habit at times. What's the different and more exciting way to do this buy then? By stepping out into the great Indian bazaar. The shopping experience is that much more exciting. Bargaining is a joy. The experience is more alive and sensorial. Every one of my senses is alive now. Buying my phone from Prahlad Shetty, the owner of a small store in the bylanes of Shanivarpeth in Pune, is that much more satisfying. The buyback offer seems a steal. Prahlad Shetty will remember when he sold me the phone. He knows exactly what I like. The next time round, three years later, he might just call me to tell me it's time to replace as a whole new set of features have arrived. Features that I just might love. Personalisation is back. Or is going to be back. With a vengeance. Not led by data and diagnostics and AI. Instead led by the reputation Prahlad Shetty has built with me. This is a relationship. As AI and brands and modern retail iron out the creases of differentiated selling and buying, Prahlad Shetty is creating the creases once again. Creases I love.

In sum, the new bleeding-edge brand is the rock-star editor of a newspaper, the ubiquitous front-facing general manager of a hotel, and your corner-shop grocer. Look at them carefully. They are rainmakers.

WTO LEGITIMACY AT STAKE IN ABU DHABI MEETING

BISWAJIT DHAR

Former professor, JNU and Vice President, Council for Social Development

TRADE ministers of the World Trade Organization (WTO) countries will meet for their 13th ministerial conference (MC13) in Abu Dhabi next month at a time when the multilateral trading system is losing an existential battle. This 'ruled-based organisation' was mandated to ensure orderly conduct of global trade through a set of rules that were mostly negotiated before 1990, when the organisation had less than 100 members. Over the past four and a half decades, the members' needs on trade have changed as the global economy has undergone significant changes. Several of these changes were triggered by the downturns that altered the economic orientation of major economies, turning them more internally oriented. In the run-up to MC13, WTO members are facing the daunting task of making the multilateral trading system respond to the needs of the contemporary world, especially those of the developing countries.

Multilateral rules, which economists consider as the best option for conducting trade, need to be constantly reviewed and updated. Equally important is the need to ensure that the agreed rules are enforced effectively for maintaining the credibility of the institution. The founders of the WTO had foreseen this imperative by putting in place a robust dispute settlement body (DSB), by far the best among all multilateral organisations. As the adage goes, WTO's DSB has "teeth that can bite", thus keeping the members honest to their commitments. Unfortunately, both arms of the WTO, the negotiating arm that would have helped update the rules, and the DSB have become dysfunctional.

At the end of the fourth ministerial conference held in Doha in 2001, trade ministers had agreed to comprehensively review the agreements finalised during the Uruguay Round. The Doha Development Agenda reflected the demands of developing countries that the Uruguay Round needed to be rebalanced to reflect their needs. But after more 15 years, the Doha agenda was abandoned, and the negotiating arm of the WTO was taken over by the dominant economies who formed "clubs of the willing" to initiate discussions on new issues that suited their interests.

An organisation mandated to undertake negotiations only when there is consensus among the members is now witnessing engagements between a subset on issues such as e-commerce and investment. South Africa and India, two economies that are not among the participants, have repeatedly pointed out that these processes are violating the core principles of multilateralism.

The Trump administration dealt a death blow to the DSB by refusing to appoint new members to the appellate body that hears appeals against the decisions of the dispute settlement panels. The appellate body is the most critical part of the DSB since its rulings on disputes between members are final and binding. The erring members have to amend their laws and policies to bring them in conformity with the WTO rules. Now that the appellate body is non-existent, members can indulge in flagrant violations of WTO disciplines. The multilateral trade rules are, thus, dead in the water.

AFP

The World Trade Organization is hobbling on old legs. It had the most robust dispute settlement body of all multilateral organisations. But Donald Trump gutted it by refusing to appoint new members to its appellate body, whose decisions are binding. Multilateral trade rules are no longer effective

It is a travesty that WTO members are not reflecting on these systemic problems. As of now, members are engaging in issue-based discussions that include two subjects vitally important for India—adoption of subsidies discipline for the fisheries sector, and review of the disciplines on agriculture.

Fishery subsidies' disciplines are aimed at prohibiting "certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminates subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing", thus promoting sustainable fishing. Though laudable, these disciplines must ensure that the governments retain their policy space to support the livelihoods of small fisherfolk in developing countries including India.

The review of the agreement on agriculture (AoA) includes a component that is critically important to India. Since the beginning of the previous decade, WTO members have been discussing the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes, the basis of India's public distribution system. For India, the significance of this issue increased manifold after the then government decided to implement the National Food Security Act (NFSA) to provide subsidised foodgrains to two-thirds of the country's population.

However, implementation of the NFSA is covered by the subsidies' disciplines of the AoA, which stipulates that WTO members must limit their value of subsidies provided to crops and for inputs to 10 percent of the value of their agricultural production. According to the AoA, subsidies for individual commodities are differences between their current administered prices, or market price support, and the international prices prevailing during 1986-88 (called "fixed external reference price"), while input subsidies are budgetary outlays. Though this formula defies all economic logic, subsidies for most crops provided by India remained below the 10 percent threshold as did the overall level of subsidies.

This situation changed after the NFSA was introduced, as AoA requires WTO members to include the differences between prices at which foodgrains for PDS are acquired and their external reference prices as subsidies. This meant that India's total subsidies would be above the 10 percent threshold, thus preventing the government from implementing the NFSA. India has consistently argued that the subsidies' discipline must be amended by either updating the external reference price and/or allowing countries to account for inflation while calculating their subsidies. However, India's arguments have not been accepted yet.

The challenge faced by India is among the plethora of legitimacy deficits that the WTO faces at this juncture. MC13 must take a decision to address this glaring weakness.

(bisjit@gmail.com)

MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Exit speculation

Jairam Ramesh claims that Milind Deora—anguished over the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena laying claim to the South Mumbai Lok Sabha seat, which has been held by Milind and his father Murli Deora—had wanted to speak with Rahul Gandhi. If Ramesh believes PM Modi determined the timing of Deora's exit from the Congress, what benefit does the BJP have in him joining the Shinde faction?
K V Seetharamaiah, email

Policy paralysis

Ref: *Apparatchiks don't speak for South Block* (Jan 11). Call it wrong a policy dictate or Modi's lack of understanding of the purpose of diplomacy, India appears to be isolated despite having a professional diplomat as the foreign minister. Where are the QUAD & Indo-Pacific groups? Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Seychelles are politically pro-China today. Despite financial help to Sri Lanka last year, they display anti-India tendencies.
Rajan Ugra, Bengaluru

Upgrade school

Ref: *Woman donates ₹7 cr land in memory of daughter* (Jan 15). It is the compassionate heart of Aayi Ammal that made her donate land worth ₹7 crore to the government to upgrade a middle school to high school in Kodikulam, Madurai. It was donated in the memory of her daughter. The government has appreciated her action and should upgrade the school with full infrastructure at the earliest.
VKS Krishnan, Kumbakonam

Maldives muddle

Mohamed Muizzu's government has set a March 15 deadline for India to withdraw its military personnel from the Maldives. After Muizzu's meeting with China, he got the guts to bargain with India. It should be noted that Maldives has gained a lot from India and this opposition may leave a deep dent. Muizzu should bear the future in mind.
Mohammad Taukir, Bettiah

Withdrawal anxiety

It is shocking that the Maldives president ordered Indian troops to withdraw, especially when the troops are meant for search, rescue and humanitarian operations in service to the Maldivian people. India may not lose much by withdrawing its forces, but Maldives may be adversely affected.
Jayaprakash Reddy, Nalgonda

AAP opportunism

The AAP's hypocrisy has reached its heights. It is an irony that the party formed as an anti-corruption platform during the UPA regime has now become an integral part of the UPA in its new avatar. There cannot be a bigger opportunist than Arvind Kejriwal.
R Sriramprasad, email

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Chairman of the Board: **Manoj Kumar Sonthalia** Editor: **Santwana Bhattacharya**

Published by **R K Jhunjhunwala** on behalf of Express Publications (Madurai) Private Limited, at No. 1, Queen's Road, Bengaluru - 560 001 and printed by him at Express Press, Plot No. 2A, Bommasandra Industrial Area, 4th Phase, Survey No. 46, Part Yarandahalli Village, Jigani Hobli, Anekal Taluk. Bengaluru - 560 099. **Bengaluru.** Vol. 60, No. 14 RNI Reg. No. 3457/1960. Phone: 080-22866893. **Copyright:** Express Publications (Madurai) Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited.

POSTS OF THE DAY

Jagat Prakash Nadda @JPNadda
(Modi Ki Guarantee) is not mere sloganeering but a resolute endeavour towards providing better lives to our citizens.

Aaditya Thackeray @AUThackeray
Why does Maharashtra CM need 1 PS, 1 PA, 7 OSDs - but wheeler dealers, 3 PROs and publicists to accompany him for an event that is highly restricted on entry protocols?

Shashi Tharoor @ShashiTharoor
Congress offers an alternative vision to the divisive and exclusionary ideology that has fractured our society through the politics of polarisation.

'INDIA bloc seat-sharing deal in a few days'

All parties in the Opposition alliance should take reasonable and realistic stand, says CPI general secretary D Raja

DAYS after the Opposition alliance naming Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge as its chairman, CPI general secretary **D Raja** spoke to **Preetha Nair** about seat-sharing talks, asserting that all the constituents are ready for 2024 polls. **Excerpts**:

There seems to be little headway in seat-sharing and other issues. With Lok Sabha elections a few months away, how prepared is the Opposition?
The INDIA alliance is not just a name. All the constituents are bound by a strong commitment that secular, democratic parties must come together and put up a collective fight against the BJP. Seat-sharing talks are taking place informally as well as formally between parties. Collectively, all the parties will sit and finalise the formula. It will be done in the coming days.

Verbatim

Though the opposition projects itself as an alternative force, the perception is that it is in disarray. What's your view?
During our last meeting, two proposals came up — Kharge as the chairperson and Nitish Kumar as the convener. Kharge's name was unanimously agreed, there was a suggestion that the decision on the convener post should be taken after consulting with parties such as the TMC and the SP, which were not present in the meeting.

BJP may announce a list of its candidates early, maybe by the end of this month...
That is their prerogative. We are also fully prepared and our state units are engaged in seat-sharing talks. All parties are aware that the end of the Budget session will lead to the countdown to the announcement of Lok Sabha polls. All parties are aware of the urgency, and will act accordingly.

Even after two rounds of talks between Congress and AAP, no seat-sharing deal has been announced...
It shouldn't come as a surprise. After all, we all are independent political parties. In a multi-party democracy, each party wants its due share in Parliament and in assemblies. Therefore, negotiations are must and it shouldn't be blown up out of proportion.

Did talks begin in Bihar?
We held preliminary discussions with Nitish Kumar, RJD leaders Lalu Prasad Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav. Left parties should get its due share. Our parties will take a reasonable and realistic stand. I expect all parties to reciprocate.

In the meeting, some parties have raised the issue of spat between alliance partners in states like West Bengal. Will it hurt the alliance?
At state levels, troubles may crop up between parties. But it should be dealt at local level so that it wouldn't affect the electoral prospects of the alliance.

> People expect that a leader of Rahul Gandhi's stature should contest against BJP from a North Indian state. In other states, regional and secular democratic parties are strong. So far, Rahul or Congress has not responded.
>
> D Raja, CPI general secretary

In Kerala, CPI has been asking Rahul Gandhi not to contest from Wayanad. What's your take?
That's one view emerging there. People expect that a leader of his stature should contest against BJP from a North Indian state. In other states, regional and secular democratic parties are strong. So far, Rahul or Congress has not responded. This opinion is emerging not only from CPI, but from other quarters as well. We will wait for Congress response.

Rahul Gandhi has embarked on a yatra when seat-sharing talks are on. Some say that it is close to elections. Do you think it will help electorally?
The yatra is also a campaign where issues can be raised. Congress has asked leaders of INDIA parties to attend and support at different places at convenient times. It is a combined campaign. For seat-sharing, Congress has constituted a separate committee and at state level, we have deputed our leaders. The yatra won't affect the seat-sharing talks or election.

The BJP has been attacking the opposition for declining the invitation to Ram temple consecration in Ayodhya. Do you think it will hurt your electoral prospects?
It is a BJP-RSS event. How can Opposition parties attend it? I don't think it will hurt us electorally. The BJP is creating a frenzy around the temple issue. We will explain to the people that it is for electoral gains.

BJP say that INDIA bloc has only an anti–PM agenda...
Our agenda is not anti-Modi. BJP is trying to build a personality cult in the name of PM Modi. Our agenda is to focus on issues like livelihood and to protect democracy and the Constitution.

The criticism is that INDIA bloc lacks a PM face...
When the United Front was formed, the PM face and Common Minimum Programme was decided after the election. Everything will be decided collectively after elections.

Did the setback in the recent state elections affect the morale of the parties?
We have learnt lessons from the state elections. The seat-sharing talks and combined campaigning could have been done in a more effective way. Except for a limited understanding in Telangana, there was no seat-sharing talks and united work in Rajasthan, MP or Chhattisgarh.

Uddhav faction moves SC against Speaker's order

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena moved the Supreme Court on Monday to challenge the order issued by Maharashtra State Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar. The Speaker had dismissed the disqualification petitions against Eknath Shinde and 38 MLAs, ruling that the Shinde faction of Shiv Sena is the real Shiv Sena.

Advocate-on-Record (AOR) Nishant Patil, told this newspaper, "The appeal challenging the Maharashtra State Assembly Speaker's orders has been filed before the Supreme Court by the Uddhav Thackeray (UT) group."

He emphasised the sensitivity, urgency, and significance of the case, suggesting that it would likely come up for a hearing in the Supreme Court within a week.

The petition highlights that the State Assembly Speaker's orders are flawed because they disregard the main grounds of the disqualification pleas filed by the UT group. The petition states, "The Speaker's order is ex-facie ultra vires the provisions of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, as it assesses the legislative majority of the 'Shinde faction' to determine the political party. The order is a complete misuse of power and is based on extraneous and irrelevant considerations. The Speaker has relied on 'legislative majority' to identify the real political party."

It emphasises that the Speaker should not base their decision on which group constitutes the political party solely on a numerical majority in the Legislative Assembly, as this is not merely a numbers game.

The petition argues that the Speaker's order is in blatant violation of the SC's judgment in the Subhash Desai case, which clearly distinguishes between a 'legislature party' and a 'political party.'

ALSO IN TOP COURT

SC notice to Centre in Lankesh case

The Supreme Court's two-judge bench issued notice to the accused and others, and sought their detailed responses, after hearing an appeal filed by Kavitha Lankesh, younger sister of slaim journalist Gauri Lankesh, who had moved it seeking cancellation of the bail of one of the accused Mohan Nayak in the case.

Striking chord with tribals: PM says Ram incomplete without Shabari

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

STRIKING a chord with the tribals a week ahead of the January 22 Ayodhya Ram temple ceremony, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the story of Lord Ram was not possible without Mata Shabari. The prime minister was interacting with beneficiaries of PM-JANMAN virtually. He said that Mata Shabari played a massive role in the transformation of Prince Ram to 'Maryada Purushottam' Ram.

"Dashrath's son Ram emerged as Deenbandhu Ram only when he ate the 'tasted' berries of tribal Mata Shabari" Modi asserted, giving a sentimental touch to the tribal connection of Shabari with Lord Ram.

Citing Ramcharitmanas to underline the importance of the community, he said, "Be it the story of Rajaram in Treta or the current situation, welfare is not possible without the poor, deprived and the tribals". As many as 4 crore permanent houses were built for the poor in the last 10 years, he added.

He also released the first installment of ₹540 crore to one lakh beneficiaries of a rural housing scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) via video conferencing. He claimed that the budget of many welfare schemes for the Scheduled Tribes has risen by five times and the scholarship for tribal students has grown two-and-a-half times in the last 10 years.

PM-JANMAN was launched for the socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) on November 15 on the occasion of Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

As per official sources, the PM-JANMAN, with a budget of approximately ₹ 24,000 crore, focuses on 11 critical interventions through nine ministries and is aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of PVTGs by saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, electricity, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

First installment of PM-JANMAN released

PM also released the first installment of ₹540 crore to one lakh beneficiaries of a rural housing scheme under the PM-JANMAN. He claimed that the budget of many welfare schemes for the Scheduled Tribes has risen by five times and the scholarship for tribal students has grown two-and-a-half times in 10 years.

PM dials Putin, backs Russia on Brics presidency

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi and Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin had a telephonic conversation on Monday during which the two leaders discussed a number of regional and international issues of mutual interest.

"I had a good conversation with President Putin. We discussed our Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership and agreed to chalk out a roadmap for future initiatives. We also exchanged views on various regional and global issues, including Russia's Presidency of the BRICS," said PM Modi.

India has assured Russia of its full support for their BRICS Presidency and also reviewed progress on bilateral cooperation. 'The talks also covered areas such as trade, scientific and technical cooperation, energy transport, and logistics cooperation between India and the Russian Far East,' according to the Russian Foreign Ministry.

Additionally, the two leaders discussed the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Ready to face fresh challenges on northern border, says Army Chief

MAYANK SINGH @ Lucknow

THE Indian Army is fully prepared to handle the challenges arising from the protracted standoff with China, which has resulted in heightened deployment along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), stated General Manoj Pande, the Chief of the Indian Army, on Monday.

He affirmed, "On the northern borders, the Indian Army is fully prepared and capable of facing any challenges. The army has taken several steps to strengthen its defenses."

He also discussed other security challenges and emphasised that amidst the rising challenges, the force has taken steps to bolster border defences. He added that in recent times, through emergency procurement procedures, the Army has inducted several cutting-edge equipment, including various weapon systems equipped with niche technologies.

General Manoj Pande addressed the audience during the 76th Army Day parade, which took place at the parade grounds of the 11 Gorkha Rifles Regiment in Lucknow.

Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande inspects the parade during Army Day celebrations at the Parade Ground in Lucknow on Monday | PTI

Regarding internal security matters, he said, "There has been significant progress in this area. Our priorities include making efforts and coordinating with other state agencies to strengthen our borders. In the western region, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is under control. However, in the Rajouri and Poonch sectors, terrorist activities have increased." He added that while a ceasefire is in place on the Line of Control, continuous ongoing infiltration suggests that terrorist camps across the border remain active.

He said, "The Indian Army has thwarted infiltration attempts with unwavering vigilance. In remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir, the strong measures taken by the security forces have resulted in reduced rates of violence."

He also discussed the situation in the northeast and the peace talks with local insurgent groups, stating that the Indian Army has conducted successful peace talks.

Scientists launch human trial of Nipah virus vaccine

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

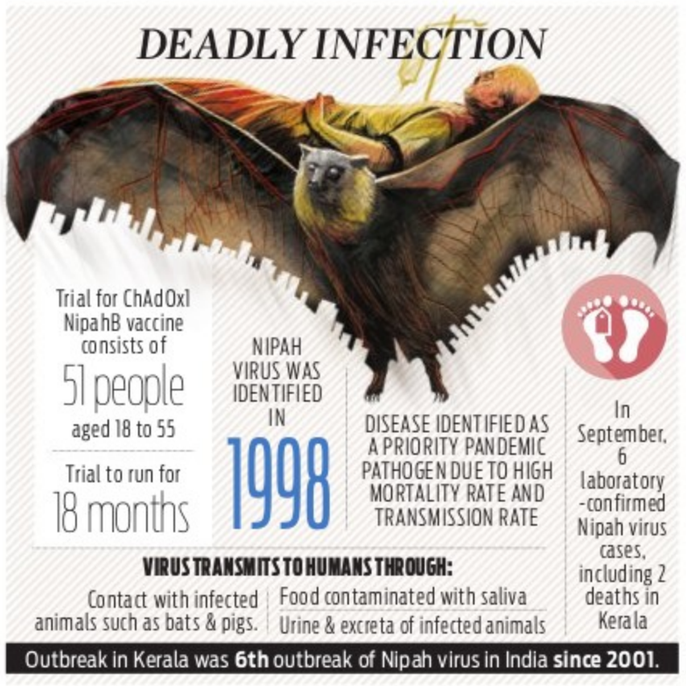
SCIENTISTS at the University of Oxford have launched the first-in-human vaccine trials for the deadly Nipah virus which impacts many Asian countries, including India.

The trials of the ChAdOx1 NipahB vaccine, consisting of 51 people aged 18 to 55, will be led by the Oxford Vaccine Group. There are currently no approved vaccines or treatments for the virus.

The virus is transmitted to humans through contact with infected animals such as bats and pigs. Fruit bats, also called flying foxes, are the animal reservoir for NiV in nature.

Despite the first outbreaks of virus, a zoonotic virus, occurring 25 years ago in Malaysia and Singapore, there are currently no approved vaccines or treatments.

"Nipah virus was first identified in 1998, and yet 25 years on the global health community still has no approved vaccines or treatments for this devastating disease," said the trial's Principal Investigator, Brian Angus, from the University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Medicine.


DEADLY INFECTION
Trial for ChAdOx1 NipahB vaccine consists of
51 people
aged 18 to 55
Trial to run for
18 months
NIPAH VIRUS WAS IDENTIFIED IN
1998
DISEASE IDENTIFIED AS A PRIORITY PANDEMIC PATHOGEN DUE TO HIGH MORTALITY RATE AND TRANSMISSION RATE
In September, 6 laboratory-confirmed Nipah virus cases, including 2 deaths in Kerala
VIRUS TRANSMITS TO HUMANS THROUGH:
Contact with infected animals such as bats & pigs.
Food contaminated with saliva
Urine & excreta of infected animals
Outbreak in Kerala was 6th outbreak of Nipah virus in India since 2001.

"Due to the high mortality rate and the nature of Nipah virus transmission, the disease is identified as a priority pandemic pathogen. This vaccine trial is an important milestone in identifying a solution that could prevent local outbreaks occurring, while also helping the world prepare for a future global pandemic," he added.

The Nipah virus can also be transmitted through food contaminated with saliva, urine, and excreta of infected animals, or directly between people. "This trial is a step forward in efforts to build a suite of tools to protect against this killer virus. Knowledge gained could also inform development of other Paramyxovirus countermeasures," said In-Kyu Yoon, acting executive director of vaccine research & development at CEPI, the funders of the trial.

The project will run over the next 18 months, with further trials expected to follow in a Nipah-affected country.

The vaccine uses the same adenovirus vector as the Oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to target a component of the Nipah virus.

In India, outbreaks have been reported from Kerala. In September last year, six laboratory-confirmed Nipah virus cases, including two deaths, in Kozhikode district, Kerala, were reported.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the outbreak in Kerala last year was the sixth outbreak of Nipah virus in India since 2001.

NHAI launches 'One Vehicle, One Fastag' for seamless movement at toll booths

PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

TAKING note of several incidents linked to multiple FASTags with a vehicle, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Monday launched 'One Vehicle, One Fastag' initiative.

The move aims to enhance efficiency of the electronic toll collection system and provide seamless movement at the toll plazas. The authority also suggested tag users to complete Know Your Customer process by month-end to avoid deactivation. The 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' has been introduced to discourage user behaviour of using a single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle, said officials.

"To avoid inconvenience, users must ensure that KYC of their latest FASTag is completed. FASTag users must also comply with 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' and discard earlier issued FASTags through their respective banks. Only the latest FASTag account shall remain active as previous tags will be deactivated or blacklisted after January 31," said officials. They added that for further queries, FASTag users can reach out to nearest toll plazas or toll-free customer care number of their respective issuer banks. In April, the daily toll collection through the FASTag achieved a historic milestone with an all-time high collection of ₹193.15 crore, with 1.16 crore transactions recorded in a single day.

Since FASTag was mandated by the government in February 2021, the number of toll plazas under the FASTag programme increased from 770 to 1,228, including 339 state toll plazas till May.

The officials added that the initiative had been taken after the recent reports of multiple FASTags being issued for a particular vehicle and being issued without KYC in violation of RBI's mandate. FASTags are sometimes deliberately not fixed on the windscreen of the vehicle, resulting in unnecessary delays at the toll plazas, said NHAI.

With a penetration rate of around 98 percent and over eight crore users, FASTag has revolutionized the Electronic Toll Collection system in the country. The initiative will help to make toll operations more efficient and ensure seamless and comfortable journeys for the National Highway users, said officials. The KYC is mandorty for onboarding users. However, most of the time owners buy FASTags in a hurry and the KYC process remains incomplete.

POLLUTION STUDY

The Bihar government has decided to conduct a real-time apportionment study in Muzaffarpur and Gaya to identify sources of air pollution in these two cities of the state, an official said on Monday.

3 KILLED IN STEAM TANK BLAST AT UP SUGAR MILL

INDIA	Max	Min		Max	Min
Ahmedabad	20	10	Mumbai	32	24
Bhopal	23	15	Panaji	08	02
Jaipur	20	09	Patna	21	15
Amritsar	16	04	Lucknow	19	10
Chennai	26	24	Port Blair	34	26
Kolkata	25	15	Imphal	23	05
Srinagar	09	-05	Chandigarh	20	04

Raj promises ₹10K to 593 govt-run temples for Jan 22

State has already announced reductions in power rate in markets

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

DURING the special celebration scheduled for January 22nd, as part of the Ram Temple Pran Pratishtha programme, the government of Rajasthan, under the leadership of Bhajanlal Sharma, will allocate ten thousand rupees each to the 593 government-run temples in the state for elaborate decorations on this auspicious day.

Additionally, to enhance the festive spirit, the government will present special awards to the best-decorated 100 temples managed by the state's Devsthan department. This allocation signifies an expenditure of nearly six crores from public funds for temple decorations.

As part of the preparations for the Ayodhya Ram Temple event, the Rajasthan government has already announced significant reductions in electricity rates for all markets in Jaipur. This initiative aims to replicate the vibrant atmosphere of Diwali decorations on January 22nd. Furthermore, the Bhajanlal government has declared January 22nd as a dry day, prohibiting the sale of liquor across the entire state.

Devasthan Minister Jora Ram Kumawat expressed, "The consecration of Ram Lalla is comparable to a nationwide festival, evoking unparalleled enthusiasm. In our state, the Devasthan Department is dedicated to celebrating it as a grand festival."

Minister Jora Ram Kumawat extends an invitation for participation beyond the temple department, encouraging trusts and committees managing temples to actively engage in public decorations. To acknowledge excellence, the priests and managers of the top 100 decorated temples in the state will be honored by the Devasthan Department.

A dedicated website, set to launch on January 21st, will facilitate the submission of photos and videos that capture the essence of temple decorations. The department will select the most outstanding entries.

In coordination with the dry day, non-vegetarian shops in the Heritage and Greater Corporation areas of Jaipur will remain closed on January 22nd. The Greater Municipal Corporation has also declared a holiday, with its officers and employees dedicated to citywide decoration and the celebration of lights.

On the day of consecration, Jaipur will glow with the radiance of 5 lakh lamps. Trade boards in markets will be reminiscent of Diwali.

Present awards

To enhance the festive spirit, the government will present special awards to the best-decorated 100 temples managed by the state's Devsthan department. This allocation signifies an expenditure of nearly six crores from public funds for temple decorations. Rajasthan government has announced significant reductions in electricity rates for all markets in Jaipur.

AYODHYA EVENT

MP declares 'dry day' for temple consecration

RAMASHNAKAR @Patna

MADHYA Pradesh has declared January 22 (Ram Temple consecration ceremony day in Ayodhya) as a dry day, a state commercial tax department order said on Sunday.

With big events, including processions and Prabhat Pheri scheduled across the state on January 22 to mark the historic event in Ayodhya, the sale of liquor and bhang will be banned in MP on January 22.

Just two days back, the state government had issued to all the 55 districts a nine-point detailed circular for Ram Temple consecration related celebrations and events in the run-up to the big day. The Sunday night development happened two days after the MP CM Dr Mohan Yadav announced, ""Five lakh laddoos (sweets) will be sent from Ujjain's world famous Mahakal Temple for the January 22 Ram Temple consecration in Ayodhya.

"We're fortunate to be witness to the historic event in Ayodhya. Ujjain's ruler King Vikramaditya built the Ram Temple in Ayodhya 2000 years ago, but the temple was demolished by Mughal ruler Babur 500 years back. So how can MP stay behind?," Yadav said.

ED raids 6 locations tied to ration scam accused TMC netas

PRANAB MONDAL @ Kolkata

DIGGING deep into the alleged ration distribution scam involving ₹10,000 crore, in which former food and supplies minister Jyotipriya Mallick was arrested, the ED on Monday carried out raids at six different locations linked to another arrested TMC leader and his associates.

The ED searched foreign money exchange premises owned by Shankar Adhya, former chief of Bongaon civic body in North 24 Parganas who is behind the bars, in Kolkata and office of a chartered accountant in Salt Lake.

Earlier, Aadhya was arrested from her residence after a prolonged search by the ED sleuths.

"His arrest was followed by the revelation made by Mallick during the course of interrogation. We believe the proceeds of the foodgrain scam was transferred to an overseas country through Adhya," said an ED officer.

Sources in the federal agency said out of ₹10,000 proceeds of the alleged scam, ₹2,000 crore was transferred to Dubai with the help of Adhya.

The sleuths of the central agency carried out searches at the four foreign exchange offices owned by Adhya in central Kolkata.

"We seized a number of documents which needs to be examined. We have come across enough evidences which suggest Adhya's involvement in sending the money to overseas," said another ED official.

While investigating the foodgrain scam case, the officers of the investigating agency, in a unprecedented incident, were bashed up and left bleeding when recently they tried to search the house of a local TMC leader in Sandeshkhali, North 24 Parganas, Shahjahan Sheikh, who is known as Mallick's close aide.

The ED officials claimed they had information that proceeds of the alleged scam was parked with Shahjahan and the raid was conducted to get access to them.

MUMBAI DIARY

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI
Our correspondent in Maharashtra
suryawanshi.sudhir@gmail.com

Narwekar's decision on disqualification a secret

The Maharashtra State Assembly, Speaker Rahul Narwekar shrouded his decision to disqualify (or not) 16 Shiv Sena MLAs, including Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, in an impenetrable veil of secrecy. Among these lawmakers, 14 hailed from Uddhav Thackeray's faction. Despite rampant speculation in political circles,Narwekar's inscrutable disposition gave little away. Rumour had it that Narwekar drafted the disqualification order on his personal laptop, safeguarding it with utmost discretion. He didn't share the order with anyone and even left the laptop locked away in his office, ensuring outcome was protected.

Political landscape shifts after Deora quits Cong

The political landscape in Maharashtra witnessed a seismic shift as former Congress Lok Sabha MP Milind Deora severed ties with the party. This move prompted expectations of a possible exodus of other prominent Congress leaders, including Maharashtra Congress Working President Nasim Khan and fellow Working President Basvaraj Patil from Osmanabad. Nasim Khan, who narrowly lost the 2019 state assembly election to a Shinde-led Sena MLA, has reportedly been offered a ministerial position in the state upon joining the Shinde Sena. Meanwhile,

Shinde works on image enhancement

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has embarked on an extensive image enhancement campaign ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. With substantial financial investments, Shinde has enlisted multiple public relations and image makeover agencies to bolster his standing as a formidable leader in Maharashtra. Previously, both his deputies, Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar, and Chief Minister Shinde shared equal prominence in promotional materials. However, recent adjustments have seen the deputies' presence reduced, while Shinde's stature has been subtly elevated.

IOA CHIEF, EC RIFT ON CEO JOINING DAY

INDRANEEL DAS @Chennai

EVEN as the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on January 5 announced the appointment of Raghuram Iyer as its CEO, there seems to be stand-off on Monday between the decision of IOA president and the CEO nomination committee on one side and most of the Executive Committee (EC) on the other.

It is learnt that the CEO went to office on Monday as instructed, but he could not function as there was no designated room to work from. He spent some time in IOA and left.

The EC on Sunday had written a letter signed by almost all members except one or two including the athletes' commission objecting to the appointment. One of the EC members felt the remuneration of ₹20 lakh per month was too much and the appointment was made without a clear mandate of EC.

Also, the appointment of CEO was not on the agenda during the EC meeting on January 5. The EC has claimed that under these circumstances, the CEO cannot be appointed. The president has also not replied to their letter raising objections.

The president's office, however, claimed that all procedures had been followed during the EC meeting and everything has been recorded. Those in the know said that a detailed reply has been sent to EC members. They confirmed that Iyer had officially joined on Monday.

According to the president's office, they had renegotiated the remuneration package and brought it down by 30 per cent.

Some even pointed out that top coaches and high performance directors in select federations are drawing about $12,000-$15,000 and there have been reports that former All India Football Federation secretary general was drawing somewhere around ₹12.5 lakh.

EXPRESS READ

Outrage among tribals over ED's action: Cong

Ranchi: Amid CM Hemant Soren skipping one after another summons issued by the ED in land scam case, Congress working president and senior tribal leader Bandhu Tirkey on Monday warned the central investigating agency of dire consequences for challenging an elected government in the state. According to Tirkey, there is an outrage among the tribals against the ED in Jharkhand, which if exploded, may create problems for them. **ENS**

Akhilesh keeps changing his colours: Maya

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

SHARING her party's experience with alliances, Mayawati said it had not been pleasant. "BSP lost more than it gained. This is the reason most parties want to ally with us. Our party can also form a post-poll alliance with an adequate share in the government," she said.

The BSP chief said Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has kept changing his colours. The former UP CM, who is credited with helming the state four times, welcomed the Ayodhya event saying her party had no objection to it.

"When a similar programme is held for the Babri mosque, then our party will not object because we don't discriminate on the basis of religion.," she said.

Clearing the air over the buzz around her retirement, Mayawati said she declared Akash Anand her political heir last month. "I want to clarify that it is not the case. I will continue to work towards strengthening the party till my last breath," she said.

Mayawati's stand means a free hand to her nephew Akash Anand in chalking out the party's strategy. In case, the party joined INDIA bloc, he would have faced pressure from many quarters over seat-sharing.

Tejashwi says no rift with JD(U) over seat-sharing, INDIA alliance stable

RAMASHANKAR @Patna

BIHAR deputy chief minister and senior RJD leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav on Monday denied any rift between RJD and JD(U) over seat-sharing among constituents of grand alliance, which is also a part of Opposition 'INDIA' bloc, in the wake of upcoming Lok Sabha election.

Talking to media persons after hosting 'dahi-chura' feast on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, Tejashwi said the talks on differences between two major allies of grand alliance over seat-sharing is meaningless. "There is no rift in grand alliance over the issue," he asserted.

In response to a query, Tejashwi said, "Why should anybody give clarification on seat-sharing? For how many days has this speculation been going on? The issue of differences between RJD and JD(U) over seat-sharing doesn't exist. Don't worry about it.

"You will know when it happens," he added. Taking a dig at Opposition BJP, RJD leader said, "Ever since grand alliance has been formed, BJP is jittery. Do you know how many jobs have been given in the state during grand alliance's rule? Reservation quota has been increased, caste-based

survey has been conducted and honorarium of self-help groups has been enhanced."

Highlighting the achievement of Nitish-led grand alliance government, Tejashwi said the state government has formulated new policies. MoUs worth ₹50,000 crore have been signed in recently held global investors' meet ever since Lalu-Nitish joined hands. BJP leaders are somewhat scared as we are fulfilling our election commitments, he remarked.

When asked why Nitish declined the offer of being convener of 'INDIA' bloc, RJD leader said, "How will know whether he (Nitish) has really done so? It may have happened, you should not worry about it," he contended. Earlier, CM visited 10 Circular Road residence of former chief minister Rabri Devi where he enjoyed 'dahi-chura' feast.

AAP, Cong tie up for mayoral polls in Chandigarh

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

The AAP and Congress forged an alliance to contest the Chandigarh Mayoral elections on January 18. The development occured after both the parties, constituents of the INDIA bloc, held talks over seat sharing for this year's Lok Sabha polls.

It is going to be a two-way contest. Observers believe that the alliance will have an edge over the ruling BJP. As per the alliance formal between AAP and Congress, the mayor will be from AAP, while the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor will contested by the Congress.

Talking to this daily, former union minister and senior leader of the congress Pawan Kumar Bansal said, "It is beginning of the end of the BJP era. Talks of the alliance between different parties including Congress and AAP at the INDIA block are going at the national level and it will depend upon the states and how the talks progress. In Chandigarh, however, we have scripted history as both Congress and AAP have entered into alliance.

Gujarat: Atrocities against women, children have doubled in five years

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA
@ Ahmedabad

GUJARAT has witnessed a consistent increase in crimes against women and children in the past five years, with the NCPCR and NCW receiving 2,294 and 2,271 complaints, respectively, as per the government records.

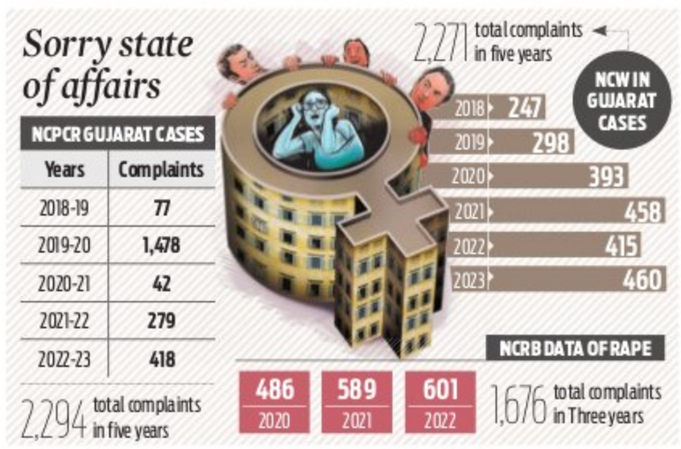
While the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has received 2,294 complaints over the past five years, the National Commission for Women (NCW) has registered 2,271 cases during the same period.

On December 6, 2023, in response to a question in Rajya Sabha, the Ministry of Women and Child Development stated that the NCPCR received 77 complaints of child abuse in 2018-19; 1,478 in 2019-20; 42 in 2020-21; 279 in 2021-22; and 418 in 2022-23. In all, 2,294 complaints were registered in five years, indicating a five-fold increase in child abuse cases between 2018-19 and 2022-23.

NCPCR took cognizance of 81 cases in 2018-19, 1478 cases in 2019-20, 42 cases in 2020-21, 279 cases in 2021-22, and 418 cases in 2022-23, of the complaints received.

Meanwhile, the NCPCR took suo-motu action or cognisance in 12 cases in 2018-19; 16 in 2019-20; 2 in 2020-21; 6 in 2021-22; and 2 in 2022-23.

According to statistics provided by the government in the Upper House, the NCW in Gujarat registered 247 cases of atrocities on women in 2018, while 298 in 2019; 393 in 2020; 458 in 2021; 415 in 2022; and 460 complaints of atrocities against women have been registered in 2023 as of November 30 taking the total to 2,271 complaints indicating a twofold increase in violence. Of the complaints registered by NCW, action was taken in 158 cases in 2018; 327 cases in 2019; 226 cases in 2020; 284 cases in 2021; 260 cases in 2022; and 224 cases in 2023.



3 dead as molten metal scrap falls on labourers

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA
@ Ahmedabad

AT least three workers, who were critically injured when molten metal fell on them at a steel factory in Gujarat's Kutch district, succumbed to their injuries during treatment at Ahmedabad on Monday. Another worker is in critical condition, and three more who were hurt were released following treatment.

The incident occurred on Sunday morning at the steel factory in Anjar town when molten metal spilled out of the furnace and fell on some workers during work, an official said. A total of seven workers were injured. They were brought to a hospital in Gandhidham, where doctors recommended four of them to Ahmedabad for treatment as their health worsened, according to a police official.

Sagar Bagmar, Superintendent of Police for Kutch (East), told the media that "the molten metal flowed out of the furnace and fell on seven workers".

Bulbul fights return to Assam for Bihu

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

THE Bulbul fights returned to Assam this Magh Bihu as the state soaked in the festive spirit. In deference to court orders, the fights of the birds were not held during Magh Bihu, also called Bhogali Bihu, from the past nine years. However, buffalo fights, another Bihu tradition, did take place, albeit unofficially.

Citing concerns under various provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, the Supreme Court had put a halt to the traditional bird fights.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday watched the birds fight at the historic Hayagrib Madhab Mandir at Hajo on the outskirts of Guwahati. He was accompanied by his family.

He told journalists that there was a misconception among people all these years that Bulbuls bleed, face difficulties or get weakened after a fight.

"But I watched them fight today. They don't suffer any damage in the two-minute fight. After the fight is over, the birds are set free. I believe this tradition, which dates back to the days of (Ahom ruler) Swargadeo Pramatta Singha, will continue," Sarma said.

Later, he wrote on X, formerly Twitter, "Breathing life into our ancient customs and rituals has been a cornerstone of our policies. After nearly a decade, I was able to witness the bulbul fight, a quintessential Bihu tradition which was recently revived by our government."

Recently, the state government issued standard operating procedures for the fights of buffaloes and birds.

It directed that Bulbuls taking part in the fights must be kept fully safe and that arrangements must be made at the site to provide them with food and water. The organisers were asked to keep an eye on the safety and security of the birds.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria besides Sarma extended their Bihu greetings to people.

Bhogali Bihu, a harvest festival, is a time for feasting and thanksgiving to God. The celebration began on Sunday night when people got together around a bonfire (meji) and sought the blessings of elders. They threw pithas (rice cakes) and areca nuts at the fire and offered prayers.

Himanta Biswa Sarmah interacts with participants of bulbul fight

AFTER 9 YEARS

In deference to court orders, the fights of the birds were not held during Magh Bihu, also called Bhogali Bihu, from the past nine years. Citing concerns under various provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, the Supreme Court had put a halt to the traditional bird fights. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday watched the birds fight at the historic Hayagrib Madhab Mandir at Hajo on the outskirts of Guwahati.

GLOBAL ECONOMY MAY WEAKEN IN 2024: WEF SURVEY

Chief economists' report says nations still grappling with headwinds from tight finances, geopolitical rifts & rapid advances in generative AI

DAVOS

AS the top leaders from across the world gather here for their annual congregation, a survey of chief economists on Monday forecast a weakening of the global economy in 2024 and accelerated geo-economic fragmentation. Warning of more economic uncertainty on the horizon, the Chief Economists Outlook report of the World Economic Forum (WEF) said the global economic prospects remain subdued. It said that the global economy continues to grapple with headwinds from tight financial conditions, geopolitical rifts and rapid advances in generative AI. More than half of chief economists (56 per cent) expected the global economy to weaken this year, while 43 per cent foresee unchanged or stronger conditions.

The outlook for South Asia and East Asia and Pacific, however, remained positive with a strong majority expecting at least moderate growth in 2024.

China emerged as an exception, with a smaller majority (69 per cent) expecting moderate growth as weak consumption, lower industrial production and property market concerns weigh on the prospects of a stronger rebound.

Globally, a strong majority also said labour markets (77 per cent) and financial conditions (70 per cent) will loosen over the coming year. Although expectations for high inflation have been pared back in all regions, regional growth outlooks vary widely and no region is slated for very strong growth in 2024. "The latest Chief Economists Outlook highlights the precarious nature of the current economic environment," WEF M Saadia Zahidi said.

"Amid accelerating divergence, the resilience of the global economy will continue to be tested in the year ahead. Though global inflation is easing, growth is stalling, financial conditions remain tight, global tensions are deepening and inequalities are rising,," she added. *Agencies*

Swiss President Viola Amherd (2nd L) speaks with China's PM Li Qiang ahead of their meeting in Kehrsatz near Bern, Switzerland, on Tuesday. Qiang is visiting Switzerland to attend the 54th World Economic Forum in Davos | AFP

China-Swiss talks touch on visa-free travel, free trade

GENEVA: China and Switzerland agreed Monday to speed up talks to upgrade their free trade agreement and to simplify visa procedures for travel between the two countries, Chinese media reported. Bern and Beijing agreed to an early launch of formal talks to expand a free trade agreement in place since 2013, state news agency Xinhua reported. China also agreed to provide visa-free entry for Swiss citizens, it said. Heading the Chinese delegation was Premier Li Qiang, who was met by Swiss President and Defence Minister Viola Amherd when he arrived at Zurich airport on Sunday.

UN seeks $4.2 bn to help people in Ukraine, refugees

BERLIN

THE UNITED NATIONS appealed on Monday for $4.2 billion to help people in Ukraine and displaced outside the country this year, saying that people on the front lines have 'exhausted their meagre resources' and many refugees also are vulnerable.

About three-quarters of the total, $3.1 billion, is meant to support some 8.5 million people inside Ukraine. The remaining $1.1 billion is sought for refugees and host communities outside Ukraine. A recent wave of attacks 'underscores the devastating civilian cost of the war' and a bitter winter is increasing the need for humanitarian aid, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN refugee agency said in a statement.

"In front-line towns and villages, people have exhausted their meagre resources and rely on aid to survive," it said.

Ukraine has been subjected to massive Russian barrages recently. More than 500 drones and missiles were fired between December 29 and January 2, according to officials in Kyiv.

Nearly two years after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, the UN says 14.6 million people in the country need help, while around 6.3 million have fled Ukraine and remain refugees. "Hundreds of thousands of children live in communities on the front lines of the war, terrified, traumatised and deprived of their basic needs. That fact alone should compel us to do everything we can to bring more humanitarian assistance to Ukraine," said Martin Griffiths, the UN's humanitarian chief. *AP*

EXPRESS READ

Not interested in being V-P: Nikki Haley

WASHINGTON: Senior Republican Party leader Nikki Haley, the lone woman in the party's presidential race, has said she is not interested in being the Vice President, asserting that she's running to be the next US President and is contending "to win". "I don't play for a second. I've never played for a second. I'm not going to start now," she said. Haley's remarks came ahead of the Iowa caucuses on Monday, which formally kicks off the beginning of the long process by which the Republicans and Democrats choose their nominees for the presidential election on November 5. AP

MAHARASHTRA METRO RAIL CORPORATION LTD.
(A joint venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of Maharashtra)
"Metro Bhavan", VIP Road, Near Dikshabhoomi, Ramdaspeth, Nagpur-440010. E-mail : md.nmrcl.tenders@gmail.com
Tender Notice No. N2-030/TR-02/2023 Dt. 20.12.2023
Name of work : Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 25kV Flexible OHE and Sectioning Posts for Nagpur Metro Rail Project Phase-2.
Cost of Documents : INR 88,500/- (inclusive of GST).
Date Of Prebid Meeting : 24.01.2024
Interested Bidders may visit **www.mahametro.org** or CPP Website : **https://eprocure.gov.in** for NIT. Bid documents can be downloaded from **https://mahatenders.gov.in** from **15.00** Hrs on **11.01.2024.**
Executive Director/ Procurement
Maha-Metro
Nagpur Metro : City's Transport Solution

Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited
Registered office: 27BKC, C-27, G-Block, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai- 400051 Branch Office: Corporate House, 2nd Floor, MG Road, Bengaluru – 560 001
CORRIGENDUM
The Property Description Mentioned In Sale **Notice Dated 22nd Of December 2023** Published On **24th Of December 2023**,in the caption of the description of the saleable property, the sentence**"FIRST FLOOR OF 430 SQ.FT. HAVING ACCOMMODATION OF ONE BEDROOM, HALL AND KITCHEN,)"** has been inadvertently added. The said sentence stands deleted and the other contents of the published Sale Notice shall remain same which may be noted for all further processes.
Authorized Officer,
Place : Bangalore , Date: 16.01.2024 Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited

MALABAR CEMENTS LIMITED
(A Government of Kerala Undertaking)
An ISO 9001 :2015, 14001:2015 Company, Walayar Post, Palakkad-678624-Kerala, Email : materials@malabarcements.com/ bulkmcl@malabarcements.com
TENDER NOTICE
Visit **www.etenders.kerala.gov.in** for Online Submission of Bids for:
❖ Unloading of Coal and other Raw Materials from Railway Wagons at MCL, Walayar. ❖ Collection and Transportation of Bulk Cement from Malabar Cements Limited, Walayar to various locations in Kerala through Bulker. ❖ Collection and Transportation of packed cement within 350 KM Radius from Malabar Cements Limited, Walayar to various locations in Kerala through Trucks. ❖ Collection and Transportation of Bulk cement from Malabar Cements Limited, Walayar to various locations in Tamil Nadu through Bulker. ❖ Renewal of Points and Crossing (102 and 103) with PSC layout at MCL Railway siding at Walayar. ❖ Disposal of Old / used Tractor. Pls.visit;www.malabarcements.co.in ❖ Supply of Vibro Feeder 250 TPH at MCL Mines. ❖ Disposal of MS/CI/GI/CU/Al & Rubber Scrap items. For details; www.mstcecommerce.com
Sd/- MANAGING DIRECTOR

ESSAR POWER
Essar Electric Power Development Corporation Limited
Essar House, 11 K. K. Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai – 400034, India.
NOTICE
1. **Essar Electric Power Development Corporation Limited ("EEPDCL")**, having its office at Essar House, 11 K.K. Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai – 400034, India has made an application for surrender of Category II Inter-State Trading License before Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, New Delhi in accordance with CERC (Procedure, Terms and Conditions of Trading License and other related matters) Regulations, 2020 and amendment thereof (**"Regulations"**).
2. EEPDCL has duly complied with the requisites for surrender of license as per Regulation 20(3) of the Regulations.
3. Complete application filed before Ld. CERC is available at www.essar.com for access by any person.
4. Objections or suggestions, if any, be filed before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3rd & 4th Floor, Chanderlok Building, 36, Janpath, New Delhi- 110001 with a copy of the objection(s) suggestion(s) to the applicant or its authorized agent, within 30 days of the publication of the notice in the newspaper.
Place: Mumbai Sd/-
Date: 15-01-2024 Rajmohan Thirunavukarasu
Director

भारत सरकार / Government of India
अंतरिक्ष विभाग / Department of Space
भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन / INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION
विक्रम साराभाई अंतरिक्ष केंद्र / VIKRAM SARABHAI SPACE CENTRE
तिरुवनंतपुरम / Thiruvananthapuram - 695 022
विज्ञापन सं. वीएसएससी-329 दिनांक 16.01.2024 / ADVERTISEMENT NO. VSSC-329 Dated 16.01.2024
भारत की प्रमुख अनुसंधान संस्थाओं में से एक **अंतरिक्ष भौतिकी प्रयोगशाला (एसपीएल), विक्रम साराभाई अंतरिक्ष केंद्र (वीएसएससी)**, तिरुवनंतपुरम के लिए उचित **कनिष्ठ अध्येता (जेआरएफ)** के पद हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं।
Applications are invited for the position of **JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOW (JRF)** tenable at one of the premier research institutions in India, the **Space Physics Laboratory (SPL)** of **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC)**, Thiruvananthapuram.

पद का नाम / Name of Position	कनिष्ठ अध्येता (जेआरएफ) / JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOW (JRF)
पदों की संख्या / No. of positions	05

अपेक्षाओं के संबंध में विस्तृत सूचना एवं दिशा–निर्देशों के लिए तथा आवेदन प्रस्तुत करने के लिए कृपया वीएसएससी वेबसाइट http://www.vssc.gov.in देखें। आवेदकों को सभी सूचनाएं केवल ई–मेल / वीएसएससी वेबसाइट के माध्यम से दी जाएंगी।
For detailed information and guidelines on the requirements and for submission of applications, please visit VSSC website http://www.vssc.gov.in. All communications with the applicants will be made through e-mail / VSSC website only.
आवेदन केवल ऑन–लाइन प्राप्त किए जाएंगे और ऑन–लाइन आवेदनों के प्रस्तुतीकरण हेतु दिनांक 16.01.2024 को 1000 बजे से 30.01.2024 को 1700 बजे तक वेबसाइट खुला रहेगा।
Applications will be received *on-line only and the website will be open from 16.01.2024 1000 hrs to 30.01.2024 1700 hrs for submission of online applications.*

INDOSTAR CAPITAL FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Add :- Silver Utopia, Third Floor, Unit No 301-A, Opposite P & G Plaza, Cardinal Gracious Road, Chakala, Andheri (E), Mumbai – 400099, India
INDOSTAR
POSSESSION NOTICE Rule 8(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002
Whereas the authorized officer of **Indostar Capital Finance Ltd.** registered office at Silver Utopia, Third Floor, Unit No 301-A, Opposite P & G Plaza, Cardinal Gracious Road, Chakala, Andheri (E), Mumbai – 400099, India, under the securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with rule 3 of the Security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower (S) / Co- Borrower (S) / Guarantor (S), to repay an amount mentioned in the notice schedule here in under. The Borrower, the Co-Borrowers having failed to repay the amount in full, notice is hereby given to the borrower, Co borrower, Guarantor and the public in general that, the Authorized Officer has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Ordinance read with rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrower, Co-Borrowers in particular the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of immovable property, their entire outstanding dues for the loan facilities availed and also for which securities have been created by them as detailed under :-

Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrower & Address	Description of the Schedule Property	Notice Date & Amount ($) Demanded
1. Mr. Noor Ahmed, No. 19/19A, 14th B Cross, Sarakki Village, 1st Phase J P Nagar, Bangalore-560078. 2. Mr. Noor Ahmed, #91, 100 Feet Ring Road, Ilyas Nagar, J.P.Nagar, Bangalore, Karnataka-560078. 3. Mr. Noor Ahmed, No. 91, 100' ring road, Ilyas Nagar, J.P nagar, Bangalore-560078. 4. Mrs. Shahnaz, No. 19/19A 14th B Cross Sarakki Village 1st Phase J P Nagar Bangalore-560078. 5. Mrs. Shahnaz, #91, 100 Feet Ring Road, Ilyas Nagar, J.P. Nagar, Bangalore, Karnataka-560078.	All that piece and parcel of property bearing no.91/345, Assessment No.46/2, Khatha no.842, Situated at Jaraganahalli Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore, Presently within the limits BBMP, and bounded on: East by : Site no.92, West by : Site no.90, North by : Site no.98 & 99, South by : Road, Measuring east to west: 27+31 ¼ /2ft., and North to south: 50ft All that piece and parcel of property bearing no.91/A, Assessment No.46/3, Khatha no.46/3 (formed by M/s. Ilyasanagar Rehabilitation & Farming Trust) Situated at Jaraganahalli Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore, Presently within the limits BBMP, and bounded on: East by : Site no.92 , West by : Road, North by : Road, South by : Road, Measuring East to West: 30+42/2ft., and North to south: 5+32/2ft .	04/11/2023 Rs. 2,73,30,191/- (Rupees Two Crore Seventy Three Lakhs Thirty Thousand One Hundred & Ninety One Only) Loan Account No. LSBGL00416-170000489, LSBGL05718-190002644 & LSBGL13920-210004616

Possession Date: 12/01/2024 Place: Bangalore Sd/- Authorised Officer - M/s. IndoStar Capital Finance Limited

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.
Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd
Corporate Office : 802, Natraj By Rustomjee, Western Express Highway, Sir M.V. Road, Andheri East, Mumbai - 400 069, Maharashtra.
Bangalore Utkarsh Branch : Office No. 180,Amrutha ,5Th Main,4Th Block West, Jayanagar,Bangalore-560011(Karnataka).
Kr Puram Branch : Office No. 1218, 2nd Floor, Pooja Complex, Old Madras Road, K R Puram, Bangalore-560036(Karnataka).
DEMAND NOTICE
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.(AHFL) under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s), issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s)to pay to AHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to AHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Sl No.	Name of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower / Guarantor (s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of the Immovable property
1.	(Loan Code : **54210000001 Bangalore UtkarshB ranch)** **Subbalakshmi R** (Borrower) **Vedavyasa K R** (Co Borrower)	**09-01-2024** **₹ 49,58,273.00**	3018 3Rd Floor Mayur Daffodils S Medahalli S.Medahalli V, Sarjapur H Hosahalli Bengaluru Urban - 562125, Karnataka.
2.	(Loan Code : **21400001066 Kr Puram Branch)** **Nagaraju N** (Borrower) **Muni Ratnamma N** (1st Co Borrower) **Naveen N** (2nd Co Borrower)	**09-01-2024** **₹ 8,62,850.00**	155 1 Sy No 155 1 Hebbagodi Village Attibele Hobli Anekal Taluk Bangalore, Bengaluru - 560099, Karnataka.

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to AHFL as aforesaid, AHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of AHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.
Place : Bangalore Utkarsh and Kr Puram Authorised Officer
Date : 16.01.2024 Aadhar Housing Finance Limited

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS GROUP
Revivalists and Futurists
Authors and Artists
Educators and Pioneers
CHENNAI DEVIS ARE ALL SET TO SPARKLE
adani
Presents
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
DEVI AWARDS
Tamil Nadu
WOMEN'S AWARDS FOR DYNAMISM & INNOVATION
January 25, 2024,
5.45 pm
ITC Grand Chola, Chennai

Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan
Governor of Telangana and Lieutenant Governor Puducherry will be presenting the awards
Presenting Partner adani | Platinum Partner TVS | Associate Partner Greenply | Celebration Partner Radico SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE

Market Watch

MARKET				GOLD				SILVER				FOREX		
759.49	Sensex	73,327.94		₹170	24 carat (10 gm)	₹63,590		₹300	1 kg	₹76,800		Dollar	82.86	
202.90	Nifty	22,097.45		₹150	22 carat (10 gm)	₹58,300		₹3	10 gm	₹768		Euro	90.73	

IT services firms struggle to close mega deals

TCS, Wipro, Infosys have reduced workforce by 16,254 cumulatively in Q3; HCLTech alone has added 3,818 freshers for the quarter

UMA KANNAN @ Bengaluru

AS clients are still watchful of macroeconomic factors, the near-term demand environment for IT services firms is still challenging and companies are struggling to close mega deals.

Tata Consultancy Services' (TCS) order book for Q3 stood at $8.1 billion. Its order book in the previous quarter was $11.2 billion. Analysts pointed out the near-term demand environment remains challenging.

Infosys has tweaked FY24 revenue guidance for the third time to 1.5-2% against 1-2.5% it had projected during the September quarter. Its large deal for the quarter stood at $3.2 billion. HCLTech too narrowed its full-year growth guidance. It is going to see 5-5.5% growth guidance against 5-5.5% it projected earlier. CEOs of top IT firms recently said clients are still making conservative investments. Wipro's large deals TCV for Q3 was over $900 million.

"The demand environment overall remains cautious. Clients are still making conservative investments, looking for efficiency, more returns on investment, and better optimisation of existing investments. But we are seeing some indicators for growth," Wipro CEO and MD Thierry Delaporte said after announcing the company's Q3 earnings.

On macroeconomic headwinds that still continue, K Krithivasan, CEO and MD, TCS, said the situation has not changed and that sentiments are the same. However, IT firms said in Q3 it bagged many AI deals. Krithivasan said they are seeing tremendous interest in Generative AI and that four production deployments have happened in Q3. Last week, TCS announced it has strengthened its AI readiness across its value chain. It also launched an AI Experience Zone, to foster hands-on proficiency in AI and Gen AI for its employees.

Wipro is working with a global healthcare insurer to develop a GenAI-powered knowledge research solution to transform their contact centre. "AI is moving from curiosity and experimentation stage to becoming vital to business strategy," Wipro CEO said.

Three IT firms - TCS, Wipro and Infosys - have reduced their workforce by 16,254 cumulatively in Q3. HCLTech has added 3,818 freshers for Q3.

Sachin Alug, CEO, NLB Services, said, "Owing to the impact of ongoing macro-economic challenges, Q3 performance of leading IT firms indicated a subdued growth. The headcount of major IT players continued to fall in Q3, posing concerns, particularly for freshers, as several IT firms are either abstaining from campus hiring or adopting a restrained hiring approach."

IT FIRMS' Q3 PERFORMANCE

- Wipro's revenues in Q3 dropped 4.4% YoY to ₹22,205 cr
- TCS' order book in Q3 was $8.1 billion
- HCLTech TCV was at $1,927 mn
- HCLTech LTM attrition in Q3 was at 12.8%
- Infosys headcount in Q3 reduced by 6,101 employees
- Infosys large deal in Q3 stood at $3.2 billion

Biz leaders see Generative-AI as opportunity to drive revenue

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Bengaluru

NEARLY 58% of business leaders in India said that they will be seeing Generative AI as an opportunity to drive revenue and innovation.

A report released by Capgemini Research Institute on Monday said as business leaders increasingly realise the power of AI and generative AI to drive innovation and unlock revenue growth, 88% plan to focus on that technology. Business leaders expect that critical decision-making will be assisted by AI in five years from now.

"Business leaders are beginning the year with an increased sense of confidence compared to 12 months ago, with technology and AI set to drive the next phase of the transition towards a more digital and sustainable global economy. It is good news that business leaders are increasing investments in a wide array of critical business areas from customer experience and innovation to talent and supply chains, and perhaps even more importantly sustainability," Aiman Ezzat, Chief Executive Officer at Capgemini said.

As per the Indian business leaders surveyed, there are plans to increase investments in areas like customer experience which is expected to see a rise of 67%, 61% increase in Engineering/ R&D/ product or service innovation, 53% increase in talent and skills, and 51% increase in sustainability.

About 50% of the Indian leaders surveyed believe cybersecurity is a top risk to business growth as against 61% of global leaders surveyed. As per the report, 56% of business leaders retain confidence in their organisation's future growth despite current macroeconomic headwinds, up from 42% 12 months ago. However, less than a third of them are optimistic about global operating environment. Also 41% of the Indian business leaders are investing in other emerging economies to reduce reliance on China.

Sensex scales 73K, Nifty ends above 22K

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

IN another milestone for India's equity market, the BSE benchmark Sensex closed above the 73,000 level for the first time on Monday and the NSE benchmark Nifty50 surpassed the 22,000 level.

The two benchmarks hitting fresh highs come as investors have turned their attention towards IT shares and two heavyweights- Reliance Industries Ltd and HDFC Bank.

The 30-share pack Sensex close the Monday session 759.49 points or 1.05% higher to a lifetime closing peak of 73,327.94. During the day, it hit an all-time high of 73,402.16. The Nifty50 notched a new peak of 22,116 and ended the day at 22,097, up 203 points or 0.93%. Investors, meanwhile, got wealthier Rs 3 lakh crore as the total market capitalisation of all BSE listed companies hit a record high of Rs 376 lakh crore on Monday, up Rs 3 lakh crore from the previous closing.

In the ongoing bull run observed since late October, the Sensex has added over 10,000 points while the Nifty50 added more than 3,200 points. The BSE Sensex crossed the mark of 72,000 in late December while the Nifty50 crossed the 21,000 level in early December.

The key driver behind Friday's and Monday's rally was a better than expected third-quarter earnings reported by the IT companies. Investors are hopeful that other heavyweights such as HDFC Bank and RIL will also announce a strong set of Q3FY24 numbers.

"The market gained momentum, led by the uptick in the IT index with the growing optimism about increased discretionary spending and strong deal wins," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In the Nifty50 pack, shares of IT firm Wipro surged 14% intraday, before closing 6% higher. Pranav Haridasan, MD and CEO at Axis Securities said that the IT sector is leading the Nifty rally this month and has spiked significantly in the last two trading sessions because of decent results backed by cheaper valuations.

India's exports increase marginally, trade deficit shrinks to 3-month low

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE country's exports saw a modest 1% increase in December, 2023, totalling $38.45 billion, while the trade deficit shrank to a three-month low of $19.8 billion, as per commerce ministry data released on Monday.

The decrease in imports by 4.85% to $58.25 billion was primarily due to a decline in crude oil shipments.

Crude oil imports fell by 22.77% to $15 billion during the same period. However, gold imports surged by 156% to $3 billion in December 2023, marking a substantial increase. However, the overall scenario for the fiscal year April-December 2023 witnessed a 5.7% drop in exports, amounting to $317.12 billion, while imports contracted by 7.93% to $505.15 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of $188.02 billion.

Red Sea crisis impact

Despite the Red Sea crisis, the ministry assured that there is no strain on container availability, as additional fleets have been enlisted to maintain revised schedules

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal during a press conference said that despite the global economic slowdown, India has maintained a positive trade balance with reduced trade deficit. Notably, the ongoing demand slowdown in Western countries and geopolitical tensions have impacted the struggling exports.

Key sectors such as petroleum products, ready-made garments, chemicals, and leather products experienced negative growth, while plastic, electronic goods, engineering items, and gems and jewellery remained in the positive zone. In addition, the estimated value of services exports contracted to $27.88 billion in December 2023, but witnessed a rise to $247.92 billion during the nine-month period.

Despite the Red Sea crisis, the ministry assured that there is no strain on container availability, as additional fleets have been enlisted to maintain revised schedules. Nevertheless, officials cautioned that the collective effect of escalated freight costs, insurance premiums, and extended transit times could substantially inflate prices of imported goods. Commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal during the conference emphasised that exporters are holding back consignments due to heightened freight charges and surcharges imposed by shipping lines, as indicated by the export promotion council during a press conference in New Delhi.

Q3 EARNINGS

Jio Financial net profit falls 56% to ₹294 cr

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

JIO FINANCIAL SERVICES on Monday reported a 56% fall in consolidated net profit to ₹294 crore for the third quarter ending December 2023 compared to the previous quarter.

The company had earned a consolidated net profit of ₹668 crore in the second quarter of the current financial year, Jio Financial Services said in a regulatory filing.

The company's revenue moderated to ₹414 crore from ₹608.04 crore in the previous quarter. For the nine months of the current financial year, the company's net profit stood at ₹1,294 crore, the filing said. The total expenses of the company, which was listed on the exchanges this year, increased sequentially to ₹98.95 crore against ₹71.43 crore in the previous quarter.

Jio Financial Services, carved out from Reliance Industries, is engaged in the business of investing and financing, insurance broking, payment bank and payment aggregator and payment gateway services.

The company and BlackRock have agreed to form a joint venture to enter into the asset management industry.

Multi-dimensional poverty in India falls by 25 crore in 9 years: Niti Aayog

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

POVERTY in India reduced significantly at multi-dimensional level, lifting 24.82 crore people out of deprivation in the last nine years, according to a NITI Aayog report.

The study, titled 'Multi-dimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06', revealed a massive decline in poverty from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14 to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23, showcasing a 17.89 percentage point reduction.

The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a globally recognised comprehensive measure that captures poverty in multiple dimensions beyond monetary aspects. Notably, the pace of decline accelerated between 2015-16 to 2019-21, with a 10.66 per cent annual rate of decline compared to 7.69% in the preceding period. All 12 indicators of the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) showed significant improvement.

UP registered largest fall in number of poor with 5.94 crore escaping multidimensional poverty during last nine years followed by Bihar at 3.77 crore, Madhya Pradesh at 2.30 crore

NITI Aayog

The report, released by Prof Ramesh Chand, Member of NITI Aayog, and BVR Subrahmanyam, CEO of NITI Aayog, highlighted the country's progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) well before 2030. Government initiatives such as Poshan Abhiyan, Anemia Mukt Bharat, and the National Food Security Act were credited for this achievement.

"Uttar Pradesh registered the largest decline in the number of poor with 5.94 crore people escaping the multidimensional poverty during the last nine years followed by Bihar at 3.77 crore, Madhya Pradesh at 2.30 crore and Rajasthan at 1.87 crore," the government release said.

Central bank proposes tighter deposit rules for housing finance cos

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE RBI has proposed tightening of norms governing deposit-taking housing finance companies (HFCs).

In a draft circular on review of regulatory framework released on Monday, the banking regulator has proposed increasing the liquid asset requirements, reducing the ceiling on the quantum of deposits they can raise as well as reducing the maturity of deposits.

As per the draft regulatory framework, HFCs must maintain liquid assets, which is 15% of the total deposits from the earlier requirement of 13%.

The regulator proposes reducing ceiling on the quantum of public deposits held by deposit-taking HFCs, which comply with all prudential norms and minimum investment grade credit rating, to 1.5 times from the existing 3% of the net owned fund.

If HFCs hold deposits in excess of the revised limit, then they will not accept fresh public deposits or renew existing deposits till the quantum of public deposits is below the revised limit. However, the existing excess deposits will be allowed to run off till maturity.

To be eligible for accepting public deposits, housing finance companies are required to obtain minimum investment grade credit rating at least once a year. In case their credit rating is below minimum investment grade, such HFCs are not allowed to renew existing deposits or accept fresh deposits till they obtain an investment grade credit rating.

The RBI has also reduced the maximum maturity period for deposits raised by HFCs from 10 years to 5 years. The minimum period of maturity for such deposits continues to be 12 months.

Deposit taking HFCs will fix board-approved internal limits separately within the limit of direct investment, for investments in unquoted shares of another company

RBI draft framework

The RBI has also proposed certain restrictions on investments made by HFCs in unlisted shares of other companies. Such restrictions were not in place earlier.

"It is advised that henceforth, deposit taking HFCs will fix board-approved internal limits separately within the limit of direct investment, for investments in unquoted shares of another company which is not a subsidiary company or a company in the same group of the HFC," the RBI said in its draft framework. The new framework has been proposed to align regulations governing HFCs with those of NBFCs. RBI began regulating HFCs from August 2019.

RBI issues draft framework for fintech SRO

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

IN order to promote self-regulation in the fintech sector, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a draft framework for recognising Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) for the sector.

The draft framework released on Monday envisages an SRO that not only frames baseline standards and rules of conduct codes, but also effectively monitors and enforces them.

The Fintech SRO should be set up as a not-for-profit company registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 to ensure transparency and clarity regarding the organisation's purpose and activities, the Memorandum of Association (MoA) of the applicant company should explicitly state the operation as an SRO-FT as one of its primary objectives.

The draft framework also requires the applicant wanting to become an SRO to have sufficient net worth and demonstrate the capability of establishing the necessary infrastructure to fulfil the responsibilities of an SRO effectively, and consistently.

The framework requires the SRO to have a robust IT infrastructure and the ability to deploy technological solutions within a reasonable timeframe.

While the SRO should be domiciled in India, it can have members from anywhere. The SRO should not set up entities or offices overseas without the prior approval of the RBI.

According to the draft framework, members should perceive the SRO as a legitimate arbiter of disputes.

EXPRESS READ

Rupee rises 9 paise against US dollar

NEW DELHI: Rupee strengthened for the ninth consecutive session to settle with a gain of 9 paise to 82.86 against the US dollar on Monday, driven by a rally in the domestic equity markets and fresh foreign fund inflows. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local currency opened at 82.82 and traded between 82.77 and 82.91 against the greenback during intra-day deals. *ENS*

SpiceJet gets BSE nod for ₹2,242 cr infusion

New Delhi: No-frills carrier SpiceJet on Monday said it has received in-principle approval from the BSE for a ₹2,242 crore capital infusion in the airline. The Gurugram-based airline said that a significant portion of the fund infusion will be utilised to fuel the airline's growth, among others. This approval paves the way for a new fund infusion of ₹2,242 crore in the airline, it said. *ENS*

KABIL-Argentina pact to explore lithium blocks

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

STATE-owned KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) on Monday signed an agreement with Argentina to explore and develop its lithium blocks.

KABIL; formed in August 2019 to identify, acquire, develop and process strategic minerals overseas for use in India; is the first Indian company to explore lithium and mining projects in a foreign country. With this Agreement, KABIL has obtained exploration and exclusivity rights for 5 blocks to evaluate, prospect and explore and subsequent to discovery of lithium exploitation rights for commercial production.

Govt removes licencing provision for consumers on quantum of power loads

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE power ministry on Monday removed the licencing provision for consumers having more than a specified quantum of load and energy storage systems (ESS).

Now they are allowed to operate and maintain dedicated transmission lines themselves. The ministry said by allowing such a facility a new category of bulk consumers would emerge, benefiting from more affordable electricity and grid reliability.

"A generating company or a person setting up a captive generating plant or an energy storage system or a consumer having load of not less than 25 MW in case of Inter State Transmission System and 10 in case of Intra-State Transmission System shall not be required licence to establish transmission line to connect the grid," said the ministry in a statement.

The ministry said the steps taken by the government had brought down losses of the distribution companies from 27% in 2014 to 15.41% in 2022-23. These rules will ensure that their losses are reduced and their viability increases; leading to them being able to provide better services to the consumers.

Open access is one of the key features of Electricity Act, 2003, but due to high charges levied by some state regulators this facility could not be utilised by the consumers to the desired level. As per the rule inter-alia prescribes that for a person availing General Network Access or Open Access, additional surcharge shall be linearly reduced and get eliminated within four years from date of grant of General Network Access or Open Access. It is provided that the additional surcharge shall be applicable only for the Open Access Consumers who are or have been consumers of the concerned Distribution licensee.

Turkey detains Israeli footballer

Ankara: Turkish authorities have detained soccer club Antalyaspor's Israeli player Sagiv Jehezkel for questioning after he displayed solidarity with people held hostage by the Hamas militant organization during a top-flight league game. The player, however, told police he was simply calling for an end to the war when after scoring a goal he displayed a bandage on his wrist with the words '100 Days 7.10'.

INDIAN SHUTTLERS SEEK BIG SERVICE

In the absence of PV Sindhu, spotlight will be on the likes of HS Prannoy, Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen

ANMOL GURUNG @ Chennai

THE next seven days or so is going to be significant for some of the elite shuttlers including Indians. For some, it's about maintaining their rhythm while for others, it's about digging deep into their resources and getting on track for Olympic qualification. The points that they earn, the shots that they execute could define their near future.

With the Paris Olympics qualification period concluding in April end, the onus will be on these globetrotters to fetch as many as ranking points as possible. With the India Open Super 750 event commencing here on Tuesday, the country's shuttlers will be looking to make the most of playing in familiar surroundings.

A productive outing could boost their prospects of catching a flight to Paris. In the absence of star shuttler PV Sindhu, the spotlight will be on the likes of HS Prannoy, Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen.

After years of toil, Prannoy has emerged as the frontrunner in the men's singles department from the country and he'll be looking to maintain his status. A strong run in front of the home fans will solidify his position in the bigger scheme of things. While Prannoy has embraced consistency in the last twenty-four months or so, the same can't be said about the other two high-profile names in the said category.

Both Srikanth and Lakshya have been unable to find solutions inside the court over the last year or so and their loss of form is evident in their fall in rankings. The India Open, thus, is a massive opportunity for the duo to get out of the rust. Former national chief coach, U Vimal Kumar, who'll be supporting the likes of Lakshya in the capital city, is hopeful that the home shuttlers can rise during the event.

India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (right) and Chirag Shetty celebrate after beating South Korea's Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Seung Jae in the men's doubles semifinal match at Malaysia Open at Bukit Jalil Axiata Arena in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday | AP

"It's an important match (opening match). He (Lakshya) needs to get wins under his belt. He hasn't been getting the results. He has had tough matches and he has been losing them. No match is easy. Prannoy also missed out last time out in Malaysia. He'll also be eager for a good run."

It's quite a puzzle that a shuttler with Lakshya's ability has been undone by his rivals in the very first round on multiple occasions in recent months. Vimal felt the shuttler is currently lacking confidence and a victory or two could help him regain that fighting spirit. "He has no injury issues. He's just lacking confidence at the moment. When you lose the very first round, it becomes difficult and no match is easy right now. He has not been able to play with confidence and put his best foot forward. The opponents have also played better than him on the day. He can regain confidence with a win over a few players," he noted.

While Srikanth and Lakshya seek fresh starts, doubles players from the country will also be buzzing, especially after their run at the Malaysia Open.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were as competitive as ever during the Malaysia meet, where they reached yet another finals before missing out on the title. 'Hunger' is the mantra that they follow and it won't be a surprise if they manage to challenge for the biggest share of pie again. It's no surprise that Vimal names them as India's best hopes. "It (Malaysia run) was very impressive. They missed out in the final but they were largely outstanding. I expect them to do well. Sure, they'll lose every once in a while but they have been very consistent and that's a very good sign. In my opinion, they are our best bet."

Another Indian pair who have had a promising rise in recent times is women's doubles duo of Tanisha Castro and Ashwini Ponnappa. Ever since forging a partnership, the pair has steadily climbed the rankings with some notable victories on the tour and they'll be eager to find another gear ahead of remaining events. After reaching the quarterfinal stage of the Malaysia Open, they'll be hoping to go higher in front of the home fans.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand is another pair who has the fight in them to spring a surprise or two. With the clock ticking, it will be paramount for the young Indian pair to get some vital wins under their belt.

"I'm impressed with Ashwini and Tanisha. They have come along really well. Earlier, we would have two good singles players (Sindhu and Saina Nehwal) and we had Ashwini and Jwala (Gutta). But now, we have two good women's doubles players. Treesa and Gayatri also have creditable wins against some top players. Tanisha and Ashwini have posted some big wins. Their victory over former world champs, Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara of Japan (in Malaysia Open), was quite notable. They are in with a chance to gain points and qualify (Olympics)."

All said and done, the event is going to be a massive challenge with some of the elite shuttlers including Viktor Axelsen (World No 1 in men's singles), An Se Young (World No 1 in women's singles) being part of the draw. One glaring miss is that there will be no representation in the women's singles draw in the absence of Sindhu. It's a rare occurrence with women's singles historically being India's go-to category.

INDIA WATCH

ROUND 1

Men's singles: HS Prannoy vs Chou Tien Chen; Lakshya Sen vs Priyanshu Rajawat; Kidambi Srikanth vs Lee Cheuk Yiu

Men's doubles: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty vs Lee Fang-Chih/Lee Fang-Jen

Women's doubles: Treesa Jolly/Gayatri Gopichand vs Lee Chia Hsin/Teng Chun Hsun; Tanisha Crasto/Ashwini Ponnappa vs Jongkolphan Kititharakul/Rawinda Prajongjai

Karnataka opener Prakar smashes 404, breaks Yuvi's record

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Shivamogga

KARNATAKA opener Prakar Chaturvedi created history on Monday after he smashed the 25-year-old record of Yuvraj Singh by scoring an unbeaten 404 in the Under-19 Cooch Behar Cricket tournament final against Mumbai.

Prakar demonstrated great temperament and skill to bat for about two-and-half days to score 404, taking the team total to 890 for the loss of eight wickets.

"Karnataka's Prakhar Chaturvedi becomes the first player to score 400 in the final of #CoochBehar Trophy with his splendid 404* knock against Mumbai," posted the BCCI on X. Playing for Punjab, Yuvraj had scored 358 against Bihar in 1999.

It was for the first time the Under-19 cricket team of Karnataka reached the finals and won it. Prakar faced 635 balls for his unbeaten 404 which included 46 boundaries and three sixes. Another Karnataka player Harshil Dharmani scored 169 runs with 19 fours and five sixes.

Karnataka's Prakar Chaturvedi becomes the first player to score 400 in the final of Cooch Behar Trophy with his unbeaten 404 against Mumbai | PTI

Speaking to *TNIE*, assistant coach S L Akshay said, "It was a great knock by Prakar, and not easy to score 400 by staying at the crease for about two-and-half days. He displayed great temperament and skill with sheer determination in his batting. He has a great chance to evolve as a true cricketer in the coming days."

Scores: Mumbai: 380, Karnataka: 890/8. Prakar Chaturvedi 404, Harshil Dharmani 169, Karthikeya K P 72; Prem Devkar 136/3

EXPRESS READ

India's gold rush continues as Yogesh wins double

Jakarta: Indian shooters' gold rush continued in the Asia Olympic Qualifiers with Yogesh Singh winning the top prize in individual as well as team event of the men's 25m centre fire pistol competition on Monday. Yogesh claimed the individual gold medal after shooting 573, finishing ahead of silver winner Muad Al Balushi of Oman (570) and Indonesia's Anang Yulianto (567). The other two Indian participants in the event, Pankaj Yadav (567) and Akshay Jain (564), ended fourth and sixth respectively. The Indian trio aggregated 1704 to bag the team gold ahead of shooters from Oman and Indonesia. In the qualifiers for shotgun in Kuwait City, Lakshay settled for the bronze after shooting 33 in the six-man final. He was placed fourth in qualification with a score of 119. PTI

Libya's Retaj defies war, patriarchy & adversity

AFP @ Tripoli

UNDER the watchful eye of her father, Libyan Retaj al-Sayeh practised discus throws near the edge of a dilapidated running track at Tripoli's Sports City.

Despite injury, a patriarchal society uninterested in women's sport and disruption from Libya's chronic insecurity, Sayeh has set her sights on this summer's Olympic Games in Paris. She has won numerous national and continental medals from a young age, and although Sayeh is yet to reach the standards required to qualify for the Olympics, the 23-year-old remains unbowed. "I believe in my own abilities... which will take me to the top," she said. Libya has been wracked by fratricidal violence since the 2011 revolution that toppled Muammar Gaddafi, while there is little funding for, or interest in, women's sport. "I challenge myself... despite the adversities and difficulties in Libya, but above all the lack of resources," she said.

Rain or shine, Retaj has been training relentlessly in an abandoned area of the Sports City strewn with debris, under the proud gaze of her father, who coaches her. Once done with her warm-up and after a moment of stillness, she whirled in circles and hurled the discus, which lands a few dozen metres away to applause from her father. Sayeh is set to take part in a meet in the UAE in February, then in June at the African Championships in Athletics, where she hopes to break her personal record (57m). To qualify for Paris, she must hit a minimum distance of 64.5m. The bronze medal-winning throw at Tokyo 2020 was 65.72m.

As a child, Sayeh showed promise in a discipline that traces its origins to the ancient Greek Olympics and requires strength, technique and endurance. Aged 10, she won her primary schools discus competition, and by the time she was 12 she had a bronze medal from her first international competition in Qatar.

Her father, Salem Sayeh, a former volleyball player and captain of the Libyan national team in 1982, has been ever-present in her career. "My father believed in my abilities and constantly supported me," she said. "He always devoted his time, his financial support and his energy to me even when I almost threw in the towel," she said.

Points to ponder in red-ball cricket

Even as the focus remains on the shortest format with the T20 World Cup on the horizon, 2024 is a big year for India in Test cricket. Five home games against England, two versus Bangladesh and three against New Zealand before they travel Down Under for another five-Test series. A look at key talking points, what to expect and more...

BUMRAH'S HOME SEASON

It took 17 Tests and three years for Jasprit Bumrah to play a match at home. Even after almost doubling it (32 Tests), the pacer has played only four home Tests. When he came back from a long injury lay-off last year, there were questions as to whether he would be able to manage the workload. Since then, he has played every game for which he was in the squad, including two Test matches. Now, as the vice-captain of the team, Bumrah is likely to play a long home Test calendar for the first time in his career. While it should not come as a surprise if his workload is managed and he is being rested here and there a bit, what he has to offer at home is still something to look forward to.

ASHWIN'S MILESTONE YEAR

There is no debate as to where R Ashwin stands in the longest format. He is arguably one of the greatest all-rounders to have played for India. The numbers say as much. At 37, he finished 2023 with 41 wickets from 7 Tests, third in the wicket-takers tally behind Nathan Lyon (47) and Pat Cummins (42). In 2024, Ashwin will play his 100th Test, in Dharamsala if all goes well, and is expected to go past the 500-wicket mark in the longest format. He needs ten wickets to become the second Indian and ninth overall to achieve the landmark.

ROHIT AS TEST CAPTAIN

When Virat Kohli calls it a day, one of the things he would be proud of is how he put Test cricket at the front and centre as captain and the overseas victories that came during his tenure. Rohit has had a crack at the ICC Trophy in all three formats as captain — he might have one more chance in T20s — but it's his Test captaincy that he will want to make more of. For the better part of the 2021-23 cycle, Rohit was in and out due to injuries, and this year could be his chance to make a mark at the helm. A dominating home season, with a series win against Bazball-ing England, followed by another away win in Australia is what is expected of him. Can he do it?

CHANCE FOR NEXT GEN

Shortly after Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman retired, the likes of Virat Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara had a long home calendar to secure a permanent place in the Test team before travelling to South Africa in 2013. Kohli is still there, so is Rohit Sharma, but the other spots are up for grabs. And the likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer could not have asked for a better calendar to do that. This season could be make or break year for them as there are quite a few pushing for a place in that top five.

ROAD TO WTC FINAL

While India are placed second at the moment in the World Test Championship table, by the time they end this year, they could lead the way ahead of other teams. All four series, including the three played at home, are a part of the WTC and how India dominates the home calendar will decide where they stand going into the five-match series in Australia. If their past record are any indication, the odds are looking pretty good for Rohit Sharma & Co. at the moment.

INDIA'S RED-BALL SCHEDULE

Feb-Mar	: 5 Tests vs England (Home)
Sep	: 2 Tests vs Bangladesh (Home)
Oct	: 3 Tests vs New Zealand (Home)
Dec	: 5 Tests vs Australia (Away)

CHASING GOALS

Ravi Prakash aims for dream homecoming at Khelo India Youth Games

HARI KRISHNAN TV @ Chennai

IT was about 3.30 in the evening on Saturday, and the preparation for the 6th Khelo India Youth Games were underway in full swing at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Chennai. Ravi Prakash, sweating under the scorching Sun at the B ground near the indoor stadium, has known this stadium for the better part of his life.

In many ways, it has become the home ground for the track and field athlete from Karur. And now, he finally has a chance to win a triple jump gold at the venue where he has been training since 2017. "I have started my career in this stadium. I have known this stadium for seven years. I am very excited to perform in this venue in front of my parents and our people," Ravi told this daily.

Hailing from Periya Panayur, a small village in Karur district, Ravi took up athletics because of his brother Lokeshwaran, who is a long jump athlete. Lokeshwaran was selected for the Center of Excellence scheme by Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu in 2015. Two years on, Lokeshwaran realized Ravi's interest in athletics and took him for the selection and the latter got admitted in the scheme as well. In the initial phase, Ravi struggled in the new city, but got acclimatised with time. "I just got into the sports with my brother, he was very interested in the jumping events and also I wanted to follow his path. That is how I got selected for the SDAT scheme in 2017. At the beginning, it was very tough for me, like being away from family, new space but gradually I adjusted to everything," he said.

Ravi was interested in jumping events from the beginning, but under the guidance of SDAT athletics coach Lakshminarayanan Ravi started focussing on triple jump in 2021. From thereon, Ravi did not look back. He won the silver in the state athletics meet in 2022, but could only secure 8th position in the last Khelo India Youth Games held in Bhopal. "I started to coach Ravi in 2021. I found that he has a much better potential in the triple jump than long jump. We focused more on it and he started to perform well. He bagged his first state medal in 2022," SDAT coach Lakshminarayanan said.

The 18-year-old bagged gold in the 2023 state athletics meet and followed it up with a top podium finish in the 38th National Junior Athletics Championships 2023 held in Coimbatore. It is at the national meet, he qualified for the Khelo India Youth Games with a 14.09m performance. Ravi was also offered coaching from foreign coaches after his achievement in the junior national championship. "Last year, he performed very well on the track by winning both the state athletics meet and national junior athletics.

He also got offers from foreign coaches to train under them after winning gold in the national athletics championship, so we are looking forward to that.

So I believe in him that he will win the gold at Khelo India which he missed last year," Lakshminarayanan signed off.

Scientists have launched a probe into microplastics in the Antarctic. The amount of microplastics is being analyzed by using nuclear science to study the region's waters, sediment and even penguin droppings

Scan for more information

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Active participation of women in nation's development

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam gives women the right to 33% reservation in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies

cbc 22201/13/0157/2324

MYTHS BUSTERS

Dr Jeswanth Satyanesan, clears misconceptions on gastritis

Director, Institute of Surgical Gastroenterology and Liver Transplantation, Government Stanley Medical College Hospital, Chennai

Myth: Eating citrus fruits will aggravate underlying gastritis conditions

Fact: Generally, it won't. Citrus may be useful in bile reflux gastritis, food poisoning and bacterial infection because of its antibacterial, antioxidant and adsorption properties. Rarely, some people may not tolerate it and those people can avoid it.

Myth: Intake of spices like pepper, fennel seeds and hot water will help control stomach inflammation

Fact: Spices usually aggravate gastritis. Rarely, people may experience relief because of its antibacterial and antioxidant properties.

Myth: Gastritis cannot be cured

Fact: Depending on the cause, it can be either controlled or cured. Irregular diet patterns, H-pylori bacterial infection, painkillers and chemotherapy drugs, food poisoning, food allergies, bile reflux, acidity and reduced blood supply are some of the main reasons for gastritis.

Myth: Chronic gastritis due to H-pylori bacterial infection will lead to stomach cancer

Fact: In India, H-pylori infection is rarely associated with stomach cancer. In fact, in African countries where H-pylori infection is very common, stomach cancer is very rare.

Myth: Painkillers will help in alleviating the inflammation

Fact: No, painkillers can cause gastritis

—COMPILED BY SINDUJA JANE

NON-INVASIVE

INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY TRANSFORMS VASCULAR DISEASE CARE

UNNIKRISHNAN S @T'Puram

THE management of vascular diseases, covering a spectrum of conditions that impact blood vessels, used to be elaborate and complicated as it required major surgeries that confined patients in the ICU at least for five days, apart from the substantial post surgery healing period. The evolution in interventional radiology has resulted in a transformative shift in treatment as patients now experience minimally invasive procedures which require a minute puncture less than 1mm, resulting in enhanced outcomes and quicker recovery times. Interventional radiologists are integral in diagnosing and guiding interventions for diverse vascular conditions.

International radiology, equipped with advanced imaging modalities such as magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), computed tomography angiography (CTA) and ultrasound have revolutionised the precision of vascular disease diagnoses. These technologies provide detailed and non-invasive insights into the vascular system, allowing healthcare professionals to pinpoint the location, severity and nature of vascular abnormalities.

"Advancements in interventional radiology have contributed to reducing procedure complications and hospital stays, leading to significant improvement in outcomes," said Dr Rohit PV Nair, consultant-interventional radiologist and embolisation specialist at Aster Medcity, Kochi.

Treatments for vascular diseases include unblocking blood vessels to inserting a stent-graft to prevent vessel rupture. Interventional radiologists collaborate closely with endocrinologists, podiatrists and vascular surgeons for procedures like angioplasty stent placement to treat peripheral vascular diseases (PAD), commonly found in individuals with diabetes, smokers and those with high cholesterol. Collaboration also extends to cardiothoracic vascular surgeons for addressing artery bulging.

Interventional radiology has refined techniques for treating deep vein thrombosis, caused by vein clots, offering a more effective alternative to year-long medication. The disease is found in people who often go on long journeys, women, obese etc. The patients have difficulty in wearing pants because of the unusual swell in one of the legs. "We suck all the clots from the veins and put a temporary filter to prevent the clot from going into the lungs," said Rohit.

When it comes to clots, health experts are concerned about 20-25% increase in blood clotting incidents after Covid-19 pandemic. "The pathogenesis of the Covid-19 virus has some effect on blood clotting. We are seeing more patients with heart attack, blocks in blood vessels to the bowels, legs etc," added Rohit.

Dr. Manish Kumar Yadav, senior consultant, neuro interventional radiology imaging and interventional radiology, KIMS Health, Thiruvananthapuram, said interventional radiology targets many of today's toughest medical cases, including vascular disease with minimal complications and utmost precision.

"A 48-year-old patient who suffered a severe stroke due to significant narrowing of a brain artery was presented at the hospital. Traditionally, complex carotid endarterectomy is the norm for such conditions, involving a long surgical procedure, anaesthesia, a scar on the neck and a lengthy hospital stay. Considering the complexities, the patient, who was a working professional, underwent a swift and efficient one-hour interventional procedure known as carotid stenting. This minimally invasive approach involves placement of a small metal stent into the narrowed artery through a minor incision made in the groin, allowing the patient to return home the same day and resume normal life at the earliest. The small incision healed quickly within days," said Manish.

Despite the sophistication involved, the treatments are cost-effective as the patients save on open surgery procedures, ICU and hospital stay. According to Rohit, advancements in interventional radiology such as endovascular robotic system for endovascular aortic repair or percutaneous endovascular abdominal aortic aneurysm repair (Pevar) would further reduce the treatment to day-care procedures. Artificial intelligence is expected to improve the plan for procedures.

TREATMENT TYPES

1. **PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE:** NARROWING AND HARDENING OF ARTERIES IN THE LIMBS
   - **Traditional treatment:** Surgical bypass common for severe cases
   - **Interventional radiology:** Angioplasty and stenting have become preferred options. They are less invasive, often performed through small incisions, reducing recovery times and complications
2. **ANEURYSMS:** WEAKENING AND BULGING OF BLOOD VESSEL WALLS, POTENTIALLY LEADING TO RUPTURE
   - **Traditional treatment:** Open surgical repair involving significant incisions and longer hospital stay
   - **Interventional radiology:** Endovascular repair using stent-grafts has become the standard. It reduces risk of complications associated with open surgery
3. **DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS:** BLOOD CLOTTING IN DEEP VEINS, OFTEN IN THE LEGS
   - **Traditional treatment:** Anticoagulant medications and in severe cases surgical thrombectomy
   - **Interventional radiology:** Catheter-directed thrombolysis involves dissolving clots directly, often performed with the guidance of imaging techniques. Sucking clots from veins, putting temporary filter to prevent the clots from going into the lungs. This approach can rapidly restore blood flow without major surgery
4. **VARICOSE VEINS:** ENLARGED, TWISTED VEINS, USUALLY IN THE LEGS
   - **Traditional treatment:** Surgical vein stripping
   - **Interventional radiology:** Endovenous laser therapy and radiofrequency ablation (RFA) are minimally invasive procedures that close off faulty veins, leading to improved cosmetic outcomes and faster recovery

The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd.
KMML (A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking), Sankaramangalam, Kollam 691 583
Phone: 0476-2651215 to 217, E-mail: md@kmml.com

TENDER NOTICE

For more details please visit E-Tendering Portal, https://etenders.kerala.gov.in or www.kmml.com

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Items
1	2024_KMML_644406_1	For supply of Stretch Wrapping Film-9675 Kg

Chavara 15.01.2024 Sd/-Managing Director for The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd.

Can Fin Homes Ltd (Sponsor: CANARA BANK)
Regd. Off: No. 29/1, Sir M. N. Krishna Rao Road, Basavanagudi Bengaluru - 560 004, Web : www.canfinhomes.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

Dear Customers, We are pleased to inform all our patrons that, our **Electronic City Branch** Premises is Shifted to an alternate premises & functioning from **16.01.2024**.
Our new address will be
No. 1024, SECOND FLOOR, ANANTH NAGAR MAIN ROAD, KAMMASANDRA, ELECTRONIC CITY, BENGALURU- 560 100
Contact no. 080-48513896, Mobile : +91 7625079171
Email id: electroniccity@canfinhomes.com
Place: Bangalore Sd/-
Date: 16.01.2024 Branch Manager

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF ODISHA
(Established Under the Central Universities Act,2009)
Post: - NAD, Sunabeda, Dist. - Koraput, Odisha. PIN - 763004
Ref: CUO/Advt. No.06/2023 Date:12.01.2024

CORRIGENDUM TO EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION FOR NON-TEACHING/ACADEMIC POSITIONS

NO. 06/2023 DATED- 20.12.2023

This is for information of all concerned that, in partial modification to advertisement no. 06/2023 DATED 20.12.2023 following is added:
1. As per DOPT OM No.36035/02/2017-Estt(Res) dated 15.01.2018, 4% reservation shall be provided in all posts to Persons With Benchmark Disabilities(PWBD).
2. Sl. No. 17: Age- Not more than 32 years.
3. Sl. No. 24: Age-Not more than 32 years.
4. Deputation posts Sl. No.02: Experience 3 years regular service in level 6 in place of level 4.
5. Deputation posts Sl. No. 04: Experience 3 years regular service in level 4 in place of level 6.

All applicants must take note of the above changes.
Sd/- Registrar I/c

MAHARASHTRA METRO RAIL CORPORATION LTD.
(A joint venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of Maharashtra)
Civil Court Metro Station, Nyayamurti Ranade Path, Pune-411005. E-mail id: tenders.pmrp@mahametro.org
Website: www.punemetrorail.org
e-tender portal https://mahatenders.gov.in
(PUNE METRO RAIL PROJECT)

E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender No. P1Misc-32/2024 Date: 16 January 2024

Name of Work: Miscellaneous Works such as Construction of Industrial sheds, Godown, new buildings and Architectural Finishing Works, MEP works, Shifting of Civil and electrical Utilities, Construction, Repair & maintenance of roads, Demolition/ Dismantling/ Repairs of old Buildings, Boundary Walls, Underground water tanks, Horticulture & Landscaping Works etc. within PMC and PCMC area for Pune Metro Rail Project.

To view this tender notice (NIT), Interested bidder may visit the Maha-Metro website www.punemetrorail.org, or CPP portal https://eprocure.gov.in or download the tender documents and obtain further details regarding the tender document from e-tender portal of Govt. of Maharashtra https://mahatenders.gov.in from 16:00 Hrs. on 16/01/2024 to 16:00 Hrs. of 09/02/2024.

Executive Director/Procurement & Contracts
Maha Metro, Greenest Metro Maha-Metro, Pune

Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Government of India
Confluence of Traditional Products and Skills of Scheduled Caste, Backward Classes and Safai Karamcharis Artisans.
ShilpSamagam
MELA 2024
14 to 24 January 2024
11.00 am to 9.00 pm
HMT Ground
Bengaluru
VOCAL for LOCAL
Exhibition and Sale of Excellent Products from various States
Cultural Program • Delicious Dishes
Entry FREE

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.
Corporate Office : Unit No.802, Natraj Rustomjee, Western Express Highway and M.V.Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai- 400069
Yelahanka Branch : #293,2nd Floor, Smk Complex,Ist Main Road, Chikkabommasandra Circle, Yelahanka New Town, Bangalore-560064,(KA).

E- AUCTION – SALE NOTICE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of immovable Properties under the Securitizationand Reconstruction of Financial Asset and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged,possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of **Yelahanka Branch** of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited will be sold on **"As is where is", "As is what is", and " Whatever there is"** with no known encumbrances Particulars of which are given below:-

Sl No.	Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of the Immovable property	Reserve Price (RP)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (10% of RP)	Nature of possession
1.	Loan Code No : 21500000336 Yelahanka Branch Beula Grace J A (Borrower) Tina S Verma (Co Borrower)	11-11-2022 ₹ 16,56,797.00	40 18 Flat No b2 Stilt Floor Girija Enclave Near Bullet Krishns Road Thindlu, Bengaluru - 560097, KARNATAKA. Bounded on **East by :** Entrance, **West by :** Open Space, **North by :** Open Space and **South by :** Flat no B1.	₹ 18,00,000.00 (Rupees Eighteen Lakhs Only)	₹ 1,80,000.00 (Rupees One Lakh Eighty Thousand Only)	Physical

1. Last Date of Submission of DD of Earnest Money Deposit along with KYC, Tender Form and accepted Terms and conditions (Tender Documents) is **15.02.2024 within 5:00 PM** at the Branch Office address mentioned herein above or uploaded on **https://bankeauctions.com**. Tenders documents received beyond last date will be considered as invalid tender and shall accordingly be rejected. No interest shall be paid on the EMD.
2. Date of Opening of the Bid/Offer (Auction Date) for Property is **16.02.2024 on https://bankeauctions.com at 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM.**
3. AHFL is not responsible for any liabilities whatsoever pending upon the property as mentioned above. The Property shall be auctioned on **'As Is Where Is Basis', 'As Is What Is Basis' and 'Whatever Is There Is Basis'.**
4. The Demand Draft Should be made in favorof 'Aadhar Housing Finance Limited' Only.
5. Auction/bidding shall be only through "Online Electronic Bidding" through the website **https://bankeauctions.com**. Bidders are advised to go through the website for detailed terms before taking part in the e-auction sale proceedings.
6. The intending bidders should register their names at portal M/s C 1 INDIA PVT LTD through the link **https: //bankeauctions. com/registration/ signup,** and get their User ID and password free of cost. Prospective bidder may avail online training on E- auction from the service provider M/s C 1 INDIA PVT LTD through the website **https://bankeauctions.com**
7. For further details contact Authorised Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited, **Manjunatha K R, Branch (Contact No. 9480074594)** OR the service provider M/s C 1 INDIA PVT LTD, **Mr. Prabhakaran (Contact No. +91 7418281709), E-mail:tn@c1india.com & support@ bankeauctions.com, Mobile No:+917291981124 /25 /26**. As on date, there is no order restraining and/or court injunction AHFL/the authorized Officer of AHFL from selling, alienating and/or disposing of the above immovable properties/secured assets.
8. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL), secured creditor's website i.e. www.aadharhousing.com.
9. The Bid incremental amount for auction is **Rs.1000/-.**

Place : Yelahanka Authorised Officer
Date : 16.01.2024 Aadhar Housing Finance Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to bring to the notice of the general public that our clients **SRI. NIBUMON MATHEW** S/o. Sri. Mathew Cherian and his wife **SMT. TINCY MATHEW** are intending to purchase the [item no.1] of schedule property and **SMT. AMULYA.H.G** W/o. Sri. Shravan Shetty.K is intending to purchase the [item no.2] of schedule property mentioned hereunder from **SRI. GANESH. K** S/o. Late. Krishnappa; the possession of the said property has already been handed over to our clients; any person's/s/Banks/Financial Company etc objecting for the proposed purchase or are having any right, title, interest or any type of claim over the scheduled property is hereby called upon to file their objections/claims whatsoever along with documentary proof **on or before 18.01.2024** with the said advocate failing which; our clients shall proceed and complete the sale transaction with the above stated person.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the immovable property bearing **[Item No.1] Site No.47,** E-Katha No.150200400100820721, Measuring East to West: 30 Feet and North to South: 45 Feet, in total measuring 1350 square Feet , Asset No.160/25/1, Converted Survey No.25/1, Conversion Order No.421446 (ALN(EBB)SR/207/22-23), dated 04/01/2023 and bounded on the **East by** : Site No.48, **West by :** Site No.46, **North by** : 25 Feet Road & **South by :** Site No.54 **[Item No.2] Site No.51,** E- Khatha No.150200400100820444 and 150200400100820500, Measuring East to West: 40 Feet and North to South: 40 Feet, in total measuring 1600 Square Feet, Converted Survey No.25/5 and 25/6, Conversion Order No. ALN(EBB)SR/21/2009-10, dated 08/07/2009 and ALN(EBB)SR/134/2011-12, dated 16/07/2012, and Bounded on the **East by :** 30 Feet Road, **West by :** Site No.52, **North by :** Site No.50, & **South by :** 25 Feet Road, both Properties Situated at; **HIRANDAHALLI Village, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore.**

C.K.V.K. LAW ASSOCIATES
Mr. VENKATESH CHANDRAN M.A., L.L.B.
Advocates & Legal Consultants
Bangalore-43. M: 9845846428

Your Guide to Spicy living
INDULGE
Every Friday with THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

REQUIREMENT OF WAREHOUSE BUILDING FOR CGASD (BSR) AT BHUBANESWAR
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Requirement of Warehouse exists for CGASD(BSR) for a total minimum area 50,000 sqft [30,000 sqft including for covered warehouse, Height of Warehouse minimum 25 ft, top ventilated, minimum 04 exits (size not less than 12 x 12 sqft min on 02 warehouse sides) with lockable shutters and RCC flooring] on rental basis for a minimum duration of 03 years w.e.f 20 Dec 2024.

Detailed Requirements:-
1. High Security boundary wall (around the warehouse) with concertina coiled fencing.
2. Iron main gate (20 x 08 sqft min) with picket gate (3 x 6 sqft min)
3. Guard Room (10 x 10 sqft min)
4. Offices for Officers (15 x 15 sqft min) with AC wiring and attached washroom - 02 rooms
5. Offices for Staff (20 x 15 sqft min) with AC wiring - minimum 06 rooms
6. Rest room for Security Staff, Duty Staff, Lady Staff, MT Drivers and casual staff with attached washroom - 05 rooms (10 x 10 sqft min)
7. Ventilated storage for flammable stores - minimum 01 room (10 x 10 sqft min)
8. Pantry (10 x 10 sqft min)
9. Minimum 20,000 sqft movement area for loading and unloading of heavy spares, movement of trailers, parking of MT vehicles and Admin requirements.
10. Closely connected with highway through RCC/Bitumin road (min 20 ft width) and not located in densely populated area.
11. Property offered must be independent and free from litigation.
12. 25 KVA independent transformer for dedicated load for office and staff rooms.
13. Generator power backup minimum 35 KW.

THE Defence Estates Officer, Govt of India. Ministry of Defence, Defence Estates Office, Odisha Circle, 163, Prachi Enclave, Chandrasekharpur,Bhubaneswar, Odisha - 751016,
Tele: 06742747631, 345, E-mail-deobhub-stats@nic.in
Inviting tenders within 15 days from the date of publication

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS City

Bengaluru Express

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
Mail us: bengalurucityexpress@gmail.com
16.01.2024
TUESDAY

DAY'S DIARY

Wikipedia's Launch

Wikipedia launched in January 2001, as a feature on Nupedia.com. It was launched as an independent website a few days later, expanding to 20,000 articles in 18 languages in its first year

THE CREATOR

Jimmy Wales created Wikipedia, a collaborative, multilingual encyclopaedia edited by a global community

POTENTIAL UNRELIABILITY

Wikipedia allows anyone to edit pages, leading to potential unreliability. Though efforts are made to verify information, inaccuracies exist

CROWD FUNDED

Wikipedia boasts over 1 billion edits and 176 million articles contributed by 27 million users

A curated guide to happenings in the city

PG 2

Blessings & Bounty

Away from the glitz and glam, Sandalwood bigwigs celebrated Makar Sankranti with their loved ones. (Clockwise from left): While actor Brinda Acharya enjoyed some yelle oota which was rounded off with some ellu-bella, actor Nimika Ratnakar preferred a peaceful day at home with a small prayer of gratitude, just like actor couple Prajwal Devaraj and Ragini who started the day with a pooja at home

The 70-minute documentary *Ayena*, which chronicles the lives of two acid attack survivors, is set to be screened in the city after being showcased at many festivals worldover

IN A SPLASH

POOJA DAS

WE often say that cinema works as a mirror, reflecting the myriad facets of our society. It has the power to reveal truths, challenge norms, and evoke empathy. However, this mirror sometimes reveals only a partial image. These untold stories, the ones that lurk in the shadows of mainstream narratives, are crucial in understanding the full spectrum of human experience. It's in these unexplored corners that documentaries like Siddhant Sarin's *Ayena*, try to fill the glaring silences as they reflect on the spaces untouched by mainstream cinema. The documentary which has gained critical acclaim in multiple international and national festivals and awards, Documentaries Without Borders Film Festival 2022 Excellence Award, Puerto Rico Film festival 2022 for Best Documentary, Oslo Film Festival 2023 for Best Feature Documentary will premiere in the city at the Bangalore International Centre on January 24.

"The film is about two acid attack survivors Ritu and Farah as it essentially focuses on their everyday negotiations, friendships, hopes, dreams and love lives and how they are negotiating their new realities and identities as survivors after facing the brutality," says Sarin, who took a journey of five years in the making of this film.

Having grown up in an environment marred by domestic violence against women, this documentary was an important one for Sarin. "Violence against women has become almost a normalcy, which I think somewhere was disturbing for me while growing up. It used to frustrate me that my sister or my mother or my friends have to live in a way that they have to constantly think about self protection. I came across these articles online, where I saw pictures and videos of young women who were acid attack survivors, but they were smiling," he says. As Sarin looked at the happy faces, he became curious with the contradiction within such a story. "I could not imagine how scarred faces could be so elated. So, I went down to the Sheroes Hangout cafe in Agra that time. I met Farah and Ritu and created a very deep bond with them," shares the founder of Delhi-based Teh Films.

Still from the film

Bengaluru, reportedly, witnessed the highest number of acid attacks in the city in 2022. In that context, showing a narrative that not only delves on the attack itself but the life after is a way for Sarin to show the survivors, not just as victims but as human beings. "The film was appreciated abroad but people were even more appreciative in India because they are not used to watching a narrative about the women who are not treated as victims. The entire idea of my film is to get to know these women up close. The friendship that I developed with my protagonists is the friendship that I want the world to witness," says Sarin.

In his journey of making this documentary, Sarin's friendship with Ritu and Farah is the most cherished. "One of my teachers told me that a film happens in a space between the filmmaker and its subject. So there was this space in between us, which was beautiful. But at the same time, it was such a heavy experience that they had gone through. Definitely also a heavy impact on me. So it would sometimes make me mentally stressed," he says.

One of the biggest challenges he faced was not imposing a narrative but rather let the narrative of the women lead the story. "It took me a long time to find a narrative structure because I am making a film about everyday life; it already becomes mundane and repetitive. So to find a story within, and combine these narratives of two women into one soul was hard because I wanted to talk about it in a larger more philosophical sense. But other than that, the fundraising was also challenging," says Sarin.

Shifting Up

Fresh off a stint in the British F4, Dion Gowda, who has roots in B'luru and has been making waves in motorsports, made his debut in the UAE F4 championship last week

DESE GOWDA

IT'S been over a decade since India last hosted a Formula 1 race – often termed the pinnacle of motorsports – and it's been even longer since an Indian-origin driver competed in the championship. But in recent years, amidst the sport's ever-growing popularity, the number of contenders from India, each vying for a spot on the F1 roster, has only grown. While drivers like Jehan Dharuvala and Kush Maini have been routinely impressing in the formula feeder series, earning themselves the support of big-name F1 teams like Red Bull and Alpine, a 16-year-old originally from Bengaluru, is now turning heads with his impressive campaigns in Karting and lower formula.

Born to a Kannadiga family in Mysuru, **Dion Gowda** impressed in his debut British Formula 4 campaign last season, earning four wins and six podium finishes, alongside, three pole positions. This year, the British resident has set his sights on the UAE Formula 4 championship that kickstarted last Wednesday at the Yas Marina International Circuit in Abu Dhabi. "It was a positive start, securing P6 in the first race. It's a competitive field with 35 drivers from around the world and I'm eager to build on this momentum, aiming for podium finishes in the upcoming races," says Gowda, adding, "Obviously, I want to do well and possibly win the championship, but it's just a season to learn again and keep improving. We've got a good chance with a really strong team and I'm so excited to see how it goes."

Driving for the Mumbai Falcons, Gowda has undertaken extensive preparations ahead of the season, including simulator and real-world testing to get acclimated to the new circuits. "I spent a lot of time on the simulator, getting used to the tracks. And then that way, I'm more prepared when I hit the track in real life, as well as that I have a test programme with a team where I do 20-plus days around the tracks. And that way, we just learn and I also build a good relationship with the team," he adds.

Scheduled over 15 races across five rounds, success in the UAE F4 championship would mark yet another significant step in Gowda's racing career, building on his impressive performances in the British FR Championship and earlier karting experiences and on his way to Formula 1 in the near future. "My ultimate aim is to become Formula One World Champion – preferably the first from India," he shares, adding, "In five years, if all goes well, we should be knocking on the door of F1. So it's not too far away now."

Who's his biggest inspiration from the world of motorsport? "Lewis Hamilton!" he quips, adding, "I grew up watching him, I've always looked up to him. The way he works, his self-confidence, and what he's accomplished so far, it's been inspiring."

Meanwhile, having been to India at the tail end of last year, he expresses his surprise at the growing popularity of motorsports in the country. "I frequently get messages from people showing their love and support. While I was at the Indian F4 Championship, I got to meet a lot of fans and interact with them, which was a good experience," he adds.

SASTRA DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY
THINK MERIT | THINK TRANSPARENCY | THINK SASTRA
PRESENTS
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
THINKEDU CONCLAVE
ELEVEN EDITIONS | 200+ SESSIONS | 500+ SPEAKERS
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS GROUP
EVENT XPRESS
The New Indian Express's ThinkEdu summit has been making headlines, provoking debate, and inspiring ideas since it began.
JANUARY 24-25 2024
10:00AM ONWARDS
ITC GRAND CHOLA CHENNAI
Presenting Partners
Associate Partners

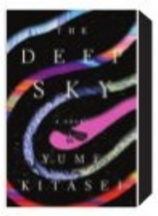
BOOK NOOK

Hell Bent
by Leigh Bardugo

Forbidden from attempting a rescue, Alex and Dawes can't call on the Ninth House for help, so they assemble a team of dubious allies to save the gentleman of Lethe. Together, they will have to navigate a maze of arcane texts and bizarre artefacts to uncover the societies' most closely guarded secrets and break every rule while doing so.

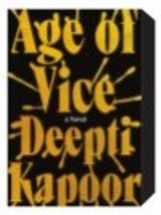
A House with Good Bones
by T Kingfisher

A haunting Southern Gothic from an award-winning master of suspense, A House With Good Bones explores the dark, twisted roots lurking just beneath the veneer of a perfect home and family.



The Deep Sky
by Yume Kitasei

The book is an enthralling sci-fi thriller debut about a mission into deep space that begins with a lethal explosion that leaves the survivors questioning the loyalty of the crew.



Age of Vice
by Deepti Kapoor

Having equal parts of being a crime thriller and family saga and transporting readers from the dusty villages of Uttar Pradesh to the urbanised New Delhi, Age of Vice is an intoxicating novel of gangsters and lovers, false friendships, forbidden romance, and the consequences of corruption.

WHAT WHEN WHY WHERE

Comedy Chariot
Enjoy standup comedy by Pronoy Chowdhury and Taral Shah as they share their comic experiences.
WHEN: Jan 16, 8.30pm
WHERE: Klayworkz Barista, JP Nagar
DETAILS: bookmyshow.com

Step Up
Start a new journey of hip hop and fusion dance. Groove into the new year with a positive attitude and fun fusion dance with sessions crafted for all age groups.
WHEN: Jan 16, 4pm
WHERE: Casa Karaoke, JP Nagar
DETAILS: bookmyshow.com

Melodious Evening
Embark on a musical journey and celebrate the beauty of diversity in a delightful mix of melodies for a relaxing evening.
WHEN: Jan 17, 7.30pm
WHERE: Lahe Lahe, Indiranagar
DETAILS: bookmyshow.com

Outdoor Adventures
Embark on a memorable day with family and enjoy a multimedia show, with well-curated cuisine, and see a man-made beach.
WHEN: Jan 17, 11am
WHERE: Jollywood Studios and Adventures, Chikkakuntanahalli
DETAILS: bookmyshow.com

Theatre Time
Get ready for an immersive theatre experience with Abhishek Thapar's *My Home at the Intersection*, which unfolds moments from a personal journey when he decided to travel to his hometown.
WHEN: Jan 17, 7.30pm **WHERE:** Ranga Shankara, JP Nagar **DETAILS:** bookmyshow.com

Moulding Therapy
Discover the art of clay in this 30-hour pottery course for beginners. From hand-building to mastering the potter's wheel, open yourself to new creative avenues as you celebrate by taking home fully-glazed creations. **WHEN:** Jan 16, 10am **WHERE:** Wheel and Potter Pottery Studio, Srinivasa Nagar
DETAILS: bookmyshow.com

Strings in Harmony
Enjoy Arnab Bhattacharya's evening melody on the sarod, accompanied by Nilimesh Chakraborty on the tabla as you indulge in a captivating dialogue of melody and rhythm.
WHEN: Jan 17, 7pm
WHERE: Bangalore International Centre, Domlur **DETAILS:** bookmyshow.com

GLAM GAME
A beauty procedure in progress at the launch of a cosmetic clinic in Jayanagar | VINOD KUMAR T

QUICK FIX

CASHEW FRIED RICE

Contributed by **A Sandhya,** Raichur

INGREDIENTS
- **Boiled Rice:** 250 gm
- **Fried Cashews:** 50 gm
- **Onion Slices:** one medium onion
- **Coriander Leaves**
- **Oil:** 2-3 tablespoons
- **Chillies:** 2-3
- **Salt:** as per taste
- **Pepper Powder:** 1/2 tablespoon
- **Garam Masala:** 1 tablespoon

METHOD
- Add 2-3 tablespoons of oil to a pan and add onion slices, chillies, and fry until colour changes.
- Add boiled rice to the pan and fry it for 30 seconds and add cashews and fry again for 30 seconds.
- Now add salt, pepper, and garam masala. Fry it for 1 minute.
- Add coriander leaves before turning off the flame.

What's cooking in your kitchen?
We are hungry for recipes with minimum ingredients and maximum flavours. Share your quick-fix with us, along with step-by-step photos, at bengalurucityexpress@gmail.com

FIT BIT

PRAPADA UTTANASANA – FOREHEAD TOWARD SHINS
(INTENSE TIPTOE STRETCH POSE)

In Sanskrit, prapada means 'tiptoe', uttana means 'intense stretch', and asana means 'pose.' Also known as Tiptoe Forward Bend, the standing forward fold relaxes the body and mind. Like many forward bends, it rejuvenates the body, in addition to calming the brain.

STEPS
- Start this asana by coming into a standing Tadasana (Mountain Pose).
- Make sure your feet remain hip-width apart.
- Stretch your arms overhead in Urdhva Hastasana and gaze upon your thumb tip.
- Exhale and bend from the lower back in the forward direction.
- You can come into a tabletop pose, back is slightly lower than hips level and palms touching flat on the ground.
- From here, slowly lift your torso up to the point at your convenience, pressing your palms down.
- Inhale, raise your heels and ensure you are in a tiptoe position on the floor.
- Move your arms towards the back, with both arms on the inside of the legs, and press the fingers on the floor.
- Make sure your forehead is toward the shins and eyes are looking towards your back.
- Maintain the position by breathing normally.
- To come out from the pose, exhale, lower your heels and then come back to a standing position of Tadasana.

BENEFITS
- This pose helps to strengthen the core muscles.
- Regular practice strengthens the hamstrings.
- Helps to strengthen the entire lower back and toes.
- Provides necessary support to the spine and torso.
- Manages the diabetes and stress.
- Helps improve the blood circulation throughout the body, which makes the lungs work.
- Helps in chronic respiratory disease.
- Stimulates Anahata (heart), Mooladhara (root), and Manipura (solar plexus) chakras, which can be activated if practiced with breathing techniques.

LIMITATIONS
Women during advanced stages of pregnancy and menstruation should avoid.
Those with lower back and neck problems.
If you have acidity, don't practice this asana.

By N Elumalai, PhD Scholar (Yoga Science) at Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education & Research, Chennai

NOW STREAMING

REGIONAL

MANGALAVAARAM (Telugu)
Fear engulfs a village as murders pile up mysteriously. Shailu, a young woman, is the heart of the story. The enigmatic tale unravels with a suspenseful cinematic journey.
Cast: Payal Rajput, Sailaja, Nandita, Shwetha, SI Maaya, Divya Pillai, Rajeshwari Devi, Ajmal Ameer, Madan, Ravindra Vijay
- **Watch on:** Disney+ Hotstar

KAATH-AL- THE CORE (Malayalam)
Matthew, a retired bank secretary, reluctantly enters politics for a by-election. The movie delves into their marriage dynamics, justice, and personal fulfilment amidst a tight-knit village community.
Cast: Mammootty, Jyothika, Anagha
- **Watch on:** Amazon Prime Video

SHASTRY VIRUDH SHASTRY (Hindi)
Seven-year-old Yaman Shastry, who binds the family together, lives in his grandparents' care, and his parents visit him on weekends. Things get twisted when Yaman's father gets a chance to settle in the US, but Guruji is unwilling to let Yaman go.
Cast: Paresh Rawal, Mimi Chakraborty, Amruta Subhash, Shiv Panditt, Neena Kulkarni
- **Watch on:** Netflix

POR THOZHIL (Tamil)
A rookie cop teams up with a veteran officer to investigate a series of murders and soon finds himself on the trail of a brutal serial killer determined to keep on taking lives.
Cast: R Sarathkumar, Ashok Selvan, Nikhila Vimal
- **Watch on:** Sony LIV

KHO GAYE HUM KAHAN (Hindi)
Three best friends juggle life as 20-somethings in Mumbai, where romance, ambition and heartbreak collide with the addictive draw of social media.
Cast: Ananya Panday, Siddhant Chaturvedi, Adarsh Gourav, Kalki Koechlin
- **Watch on:** Netflix

All the streaming apps can be accessed on smartphones and smart TVs with Internet connection.

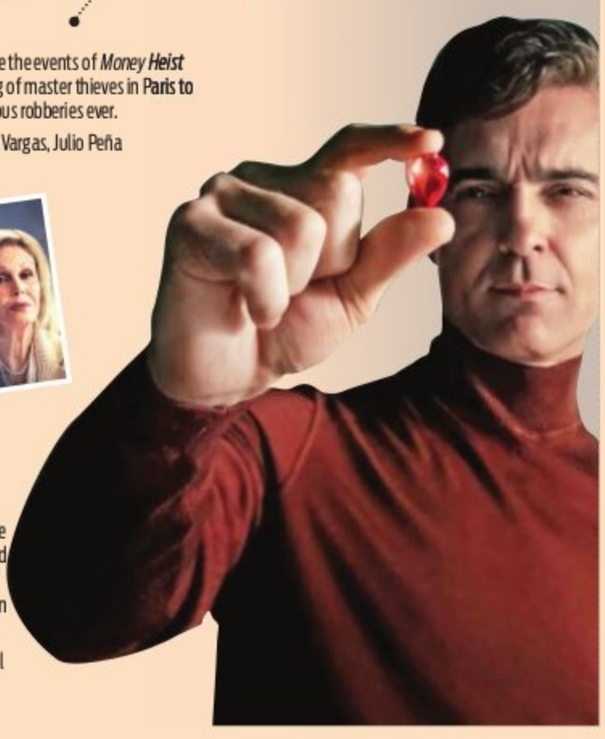
A RANJITH CINEMA (Malayalam)
A young filmmaker starts adding horror-filled fictional events to a screenplay based on his life and questions his sanity when they start coming true.
Cast: Asif Ali, Namitha Pramod, Aju Varghese, Hannah Reji Koshy, Anson Paul.
- **Watch on:** Netflix

800 (Tamil)
Follow the life of Muthiah Muralidaran, Sri Lanka's 800-wicket cricket champion. The story traces the many facets of Muralidaran's life, from refugee to cricketing legend.
Cast: Madhur Mittal, Mahima Nambiar, Narain
- **Watch on:** Amazon Prime Video/ Jio Cinema

FOREIGN

BERLIN (Spanish series)
Back to his golden age before the events of *Money Heist* Berlin brings together a gang of master thieves in **Paris to** plan one of his most ambitious robberies ever.
Cast: Pedro Alonso, Begoña Vargas, Julio Peña
- **Watch on:** Netflix

FOOL ME ONCE (English, series)
Widowed Maya Stern is trying to come to terms with the brutal murder of her husband when she spots an image of her late husband captured on her toddler's nanny cam.
Cast: Michelle Keegan, Adeel Akhtar, Richard Armitage
- **Watch on:** Netflix



THE EQUALIZER 3 (English)
Robert McCall finds himself at home in southern Italy, but he discovers his friends are under the control of local crime bosses. As events turn deadly, McCall becomes his friends' protector by taking on the mafia.
Cast: Denzel Washington, Dakota Fanning, Eugenio Mastrandrea
- **Watch on:** Netflix

SALTBURN (English)
A student at Oxford University finds himself drawn into the world of a charming and aristocratic classmate, who invites him to his eccentric family's sprawling Saltburn estate for a summer never to be forgotten.
Cast: Barry Keoghan, Jacob Elordi, Rosamund Pike
- **Watch on:** Amazon Prime Video

SUBSCRIPTION	
Netflix:	₹199/month
Prime Video:	₹299/month
Jio Cinema:	₹999/year
Disney+ Hotstar:	₹899/year
Zee5:	₹699/year
Viki Rakuten:	₹299/month
Aha:	₹699/year
SonyLIV:	₹299/month

LEKSHMI C PILLAI

Despite post-pandemic challenges, the automobile industry in India has found its stride, registering record sales while embracing the global shift to electric and other trends. *CE* brings you the big picture

The writer is a freelance auto expert who hosts TV shows and anchors the YouTube channel 'CAR KADUVA'

XPRESS HIGHWAY
FORTNIGHTLY SEGMENT ON WHAT'S REVVING UP IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

THE Indian automobile market roared to new heights in 2023, showcasing a robust growth trend. Recent figures reveal a groundbreaking milestone, with the annual passenger car market soaring past the 40 lakh mark for the first time — a remarkable 8 per cent surge compared to the previous year.

Behind these impressive numbers are automotive giants achieving monumental feats. Maruti Suzuki, a stalwart in the industry, accounted for nearly 40 per cent of the sales, while Hyundai Motor India set a record with domestic sales surpassing 6,00,000 cars.

Post the disruptions caused by the pandemic and supply chain constraints, the car market is gradually regaining its stride. However, customers still contend with extended waiting periods, ranging from weeks to 8-10 months.

Unprecedented demand has outpaced production numbers, turning India into a manufacturing hub for exports to emerging markets.

Safety has become a paramount concern for buyers, influencing their purchasing decisions. Features like airbags and advanced driver-assist systems (ADAS) have gained popularity, prompting the implementation of Bharat NCAP, India's crash-test rating standards. Tata Safari and Harrier emerged as trailblazers, securing 5-star ratings in adult and child occupant protection.

As safety becomes a focal point, more models are expected to announce BNCAP ratings. The focus on safety mechanisms, experts argue, will result in a increase in car prices.

Sales surge

Maruti Suzuki retains its coveted position as the leader in the market, boasting a 40 per cent market share. With an impressive 17 lakh cars sold in India and 2,70,000 units exported, Maruti's dominance remains unchallenged. The brand's collaboration with Toyota, supplying models like Glanza and Rumion, has proven to be mutually beneficial.

Hyundai India, not to be outdone, achieved a historic milestone by selling 6,02,111 units — an impressive 9 per cent increase from the previous year. Holding a 15 per cent market share, Hyundai's success extends to its sister concern, KIA, which enjoys a 5-6 per cent share of the market. Tata Motors and Mahindra follow, with market shares of 15 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively. Meanwhile, Toyota and Honda secured 5 per cent and 2.75 per cent of the market, with the latter gaining traction after the launch of Elevate SUV.

Price hikes

The landscape of the automotive market is evolving, marked by price hikes. Citing factors like rising input costs, commodity pricing, and increased logistics costs, brands like TATA Motors, Maruti Suzuki, MG, Hyundai, and Skoda have adjusted their prices.

Even luxury players, Mercedes-Benz India, are not immune to these adjustments, signalling an industry shift.

Electric trends

In the realm of electric vehicles (EVs), Chinese carmaker BYD has claimed the top spot in the global electric car market by selling over 30 lakh units, surpassing even the renowned Tesla. This year marks BYD's debut in the global top 10 car sales. In India, BYD has made its presence known with models like the E6 MPV and Atto3 SUV.

Hyundai Motor Group is gearing up for a significant shift, completing the redevelopment of the Kia AutoLand Gwangmyeong EV plant to produce the brand's EV3 – a compact EV aimed at both domestic and international markets. The overarching strategy aims to position the group as one of the top three global EV manufacturers by 2030.

Cars as residential and mobility spaces

Connectivity is emerging as a pivotal trend, blurring the lines between residential and mobility spaces. Cars are becoming more than just vehicles, offering the ability to control digital appliances via in-car infotainment systems. Conversely, AI speakers, TVs, and smartphone apps enable remote vehicle control, emphasising a seamless blend of technology in everyday life.

Recently, Hyundai Motor Company and Kia Corporation entered into a groundbreaking agreement with Samsung Electronics, fostering a Car-to-Home and Home-to-Car service partnership. This collaboration aims to elevate the connectivity experience between residential and mobility spaces.

Growing trends of ADAS

As vehicles embrace advanced driver-assistance technology (ADAS), the industry is on the brink of a transformative era. These features not only pave the way for autonomous driving but also propel the domestic ADAS market toward the billion-dollar mark. Giants like BMW Group and Mercedes-Benz are already venturing into Level 3 ADAS, securing test licences for self-driving on high-speed roads. This push towards autonomy is reflected in players in the Indian market incorporating ADAS level 1 & 2 technology in their flagship models.

The trajectory is set, and the Indian automotive landscape is poised for an electrifying future filled with innovation and connectivity.

NEW RELEASES

New Hyundai Creta to launch today

Hyundai Motor India which had officially opened bookings for the much-anticipated new Hyundai Creta will be launching today. The vehicle exudes a commanding front look with a new radiator grill and an upright hood design, projecting a robust, assertive, and distinctive road presence. The interior of the new Hyundai Creta is packed with advanced hi-tech features, emanating a futuristic and cockpit-like feel. The seamlessly integrated infotainment screen and digital cluster offer a wide range of information. Available with three engine options, including the sporty and potent 1.5L Kappa Turbo GDi Petrol, 1.5L MPi Petrol, and 1.5L U2 CRDi Diesel, the new Hyundai Creta provides versatility. Customers can choose from four transmission options, including 6-speed Manual, IVT (Intelligent Variable Transmission), 7-speed DCT (Dual Clutch Transmission), and 6-speed Automatic transmission. Bookings for the new Hyundai Creta can be made at any Hyundai Dealership with an initial amount of ₹25,000.

Skoda records sale of 1,00,000 cars

Skoda Auto India celebrates a remarkable milestone, having sold over 1,00,000 cars in the last two years. This achievement underscores Skoda's successful India-centric product strategy, marked by the launch of two world-class products tailored for the Indian market – Kushaq and Slavia. These models have played a pivotal role in achieving these volumes in just two years, which previously took the company more than six years to accomplish. While 2022 was a record-breaking year for Skoda Auto India, with the launches of Kushaq and Slavia, 2023 faced some challenges due to supply issues and related constraints. Despite these obstacles, Skoda achieved sales of 48,755 units from January 1 to December 31, 2023, showcasing resilience and a commitment to a full recovery. The company has reached this significant landmark in the shortest time in its India operations, reinforcing its position in the Indian automotive landscape.

Simple Energy unveils latest electric two-wheeler

Electric vehicle and clean energy startup Simple Energy has unveiled its latest electric two-wheeler, Simple Dot One, with an attractive starting price of ₹1,39,999 (Ex-showroom Bangalore). The Dot One, equipped with a fixed battery, achieves an impressive 160 km range in IDC, making it the longest-range E2W in its segment. Available in four colours, the Dot One comes with a 750W charger, setting new benchmarks as the fastest E2W in its segment, accelerating from 0 to 40 kmph in a remarkable 2.77 seconds. With a 3.7 kWh battery capacity and an 8.5 kW electric motor, it delivers a peak torque output of 72 Nm, further solidifying its position in the electric vehicle landscape. Pre-bookings are set to commence on January 27, with existing customers given priority to switch from Simple One to Dot One at ₹1,39,999 (Ex-showroom Bangalore). Pre-bookings can be made at www.simpleenergy.in for just ₹1,947.

No, I didn't forget my books! I only forgot reading

I am a Tsundoku! This phenomenon of acquiring reading material, and piling them up at home without reading any of them, is not merely a Japanese thing. My house in Bengaluru is a 'textbook' example. Today, thousands of books sit as exhibits across book shelves and in the attic, untouched, calling me out to read a word or two. But when, where and how do I begin? I was never in this despair before, when I used to call my books friends. But today, my busy self looks at my library as an alien world.

Flashback a few years! After every hard day at school and college, tucked into bed post supper at home, I would call a night only after I had read some pages from my choicest book. If it were a comic, I used to devour an entire edition in one swoop, while in the case of a novel or nonfiction educating work, at least 20 pages would lull me to sleep. "Books for bedtime, and reading for rest" was the daily driver.

In kindergarten, I won the first prize for narrating a Panchatantra tale titled – *The Jackal and the War Drum*, word-to-word, after reading it and amusing myself with the speech bubbles and pictures, from an *Amar Chitra Katha*. In my childish innocence, I believed I had unlocked the power of reading, for it could win me prizes. But gradually getting on to more books, and developing tastes for specialised subjects and genres, revealed that books are a universe unto themselves, with the power to widen our horizon and deepen our imagination.

The journey began with the splash of colours and memorable scenes from the Puranas and Indian way of life in *ACK*, *Tinkle*, *Chandamama*, and *Chacha Chaudhary*. The popular European fairy tales by Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, and Aesop's Fables quickly followed, tugging along Enid Blyton, and the gripping lives of *Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew*. To glance through the windows of the world and beyond, the evergreen *Childcraft*, *World Book* and *Britannica* were go-to addresses. My childhood was spent in sufficient study and story.

Day turned to night, night to day, and the years passed, kindling newer interests. Inquisitiveness heightened the thirst for more knowledge and experience. In the comfort of home, on the bus, or between classes, books loyally attended to my time on hand. In this steady read-up, I cherished one book after another, with the rush to have more. At every book fair and literature festival, captivated by the presence of authors in flesh and blood, offering invaluable peeks into their genius, more books joined the pile. When authors become favourites, they enter your life. They motivate and guide, educate and entertain. In times of boredom or just a bad day, books remind us that they are friends to stay, and attentive reading calms the mind. Whenever I read a page and looked up, the text would play out vividly in front of my eyes. Such was the joy with my books close to my chest.

Overtime, I amassed thousands of books – Stephen King, Robin Cook, Michael Crichton, RK Narayan, Ashwin Sanghi, *Tintin*, *Asterix* et al, and many more on contemporary nonfiction themes. I also inherited classic works. However, as the book load increased, my time in the reading room gradually eroded. Blame it on work and family priorities, or plain laziness and a cluttered mind, or worse still too much screentime – I was deserting my books. The commitment to read was there, but the exercise felt like a chore.

From a time when reading was a constant companion, tackling my troubles for me, and helping me build perspective, I had hit a point where I began to procrastinate on the once must activity. This had to change, and I decided to re-discover my reader self. I began by looking into comics, for some quick and fun reading, to begin feeling a sense of accomplishment, before moving to one or two pages at a time, from some heavy-duty writings. I made it a point to read at least a little chapter before sleep, whatever the time. And you realise, one chapter continues to several chapters, and you have finished the book in no time. The author is back in your life. And yet there are scores of books waiting to be touched, standing as relics from a timeless era, with every page decked as an ancient inscription with all that mold.

An integral accomplishment of our highly-evolved brains was the invention of language, and what followed – the written word and its reading. Reading keeps the mind young and active, and spurs imagination beyond unfathomable realms. While reading broadens your reach, that reach culminates within yourself, for it makes you a better person. I have re-embarked on the journey of a bibliophile, and launched myself towards my book universe, one page at a time and a story for a lifetime. Books never age!

(The writer's views are his own)

CITY READ

Students shine in academics and activities

Students of Global Indian International School have been shining in different fields. While Atharv Naidu earned the Best Player of the tournament in state-level Under-12 basketball, Ganesh, another student secured a gold medal at the 22nd state-level Wushu Championship, advancing to the national level in Mumbai. Shazana Mondal stood first in the International English Olympiad, while Vedha Manoj grabbed the first prize in the Global Art Creative Star Contest.

BMTC introduces new non-AC routes

Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has enhanced commuter convenience by introducing new non-AC routes. From January 11, BMTC commenced two new routes. The first, Route 355, connects Kempegowda Bus Station to Bommasandra Village, passing through Corporation, Wilson Garden, Dairy Circle, Madiwala, and Electronic City with six trips daily. The second, NICE-6 operates between Basaveshwara Nagara and Electronic City-Wipro gate, serving locations such as Sunkadakatte, Gollarahatti, and Nice Road with two daily trips. From January 12, BMTC introduced additional non-AC routes. The first route, MKT-12HK/8, runs from Hosakote bus stand to Basapura, covering key locations like Hasigala, Kammasandra, Sulibele, Bendiganahalli Govt school, and Ambalipura with four trips daily.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICE
CHANGE OF NAME

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **SHRINIVAS**(OLD NAME) S/o MADHAVDAS JAJOO aged About 53 years residing at Flat No T-307,SRI RAJA RAJESHWARI RESIDENCY, NO.337, 17TH CROSS ROAD, RAJARAJESHWARINAGAR POST, BANGALORE-560098 I Have Changed My Name as **SHRINIWAS JAJU** Affidavit Dated 12/01/2024 sworn before Notary by Deepa M

CHANGE OF NAME
I, NOOR AYESHA MUSTHASIN, D/o. Mohammed Mudassir Musthasin, Residing at No. 1818, 1st Stage, 5th Block, 30th Cross, HBR Layout, Bengaluru-560043, have changed my name to **NOOR AYESHA MUDASIR** to **NOOR AYESHA MUSTHASIN,** Vide affidavit dated: 20.12.2023 before notary I. KANIKHA RAJA, Bengaluru.

For SMART ADS & THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS CLASSIFIEDS
Contact : Mr Ravi Kumar
9886550650
080-22866893

SMART ADS

PURVA BLUE BELLE
Adjacent to Magadi Road Metro Station
(Purple lane) Rajajinagar
3 Bedroom Jodi units
5 Bedroom + Servant room with all Luxurious Amenities.
Direct metro from here to ITPL (white field) / KR PURAM/ BYYAPPANAHALLI .
Very good Convenience those who are working above Areas.
Only few units left for Sale.
Contact : Owner 9844027560

DNR Highline @ Okalipuram
near LULU Mall
Rajajinagar
3 & 4 BHK FLATS
with 7 Star Luxurious Amenities.
Only Few Flats available for Sale. for details
Contact : Owner 9844027560

Achyuth Kumar

'I DON'T HAVE A BAROMETER TO DETERMINE WHAT GENRE WORKS FOR ME'

...says actor Achyuth Kumar, as he opens up about his upcoming film, Bachelor Party, working with debutant director, Abhijit Mahesh, and the significance of pivotal roles

CE FEATURES

ACHYUTH Kumar is one of those rare actors who captures versatility with authenticity and effortlessly brings any character to life. In a recent interview, actor Nayanthara appreciated Achyuth's performance in her recent release, *Annapoorani*, in which he portrayed the role of a father.

"This is an actor's job," says Achyuth Kumar, a seasoned artist with prominent roles in over 350 films, predominantly in Kannada and other South Indian languages. When asked if he is a satisfied actor, he responds, "If I was, I would have left everything and returned to my hometown with my family. There is no such thing as satisfaction for an actor. Happiness comes from facing challenges. Being recognised for a role brings satisfaction but also urges you to do more. The joy of playing a role knows no bounds."

To be a highlight in a film, playing a pivotal role, what are your contributions? Achyuth explains, "A well-rounded character reflects our efforts.

A still from the film

Mere appearances won't contribute; you must be part of the film's journey for it to be featured prominently. Only if it fits the story will our efforts be recognised. Examples like *Kantara* or the recent *Kaatera* showcase my contributions to the story. Recognition for our work comes only when it is valued on such platforms."

Achyuth Kumar, anticipating his next venture, director Abhijit Mahesh's *Bachelor Party,* describes it as a roller coaster fun entertainer, and further talks about how he enjoyed sharing screen space with Diganth Manchale and Yogi. Hesitant to reveal details about his character, he humorously adds, "If I reveal my role, the entire film story will be out. Directors often instruct me to keep my character a secret." Discussing the experience, Achyuth shares, "It was a fun experience, especially as the three of us travelled throughout for the film. We were taken to an unknown destination in Thailand. For us, it was work, unlimited shooting. Spending 18 days together, we got to explore the best locations of Thailand, thanks to producer Rakshit Shetty's well-organised travel and shooting," he says.

On working with a debutant like Abhijit Mahesh, Achyuth explains how a director's sense for storytelling is more important than experience. "Regardless of experience, the director's storytelling matters. Abhijit Mahesh's narrative process was good. When he gets behind the camera, he becomes very serious and we would often try to make him laugh," he chuckles. Reflecting on different directorial styles, Achyuth mentions, "I have come across senior directors who struggle to narrate a story but excel at presenting it on screen. Directors like Pawan Kumar, whom I find complicated in script narration, are great when it comes to execution, as seen in *Lucia*," he says.

Despite receiving three to four scripts a week with pivotal characters, Achyuth stresses the importance of experience in making selective choices. "With 23 years in the industry, I choose to be part of better films while acknowledging that I am also part of the worst ones. That's the actor's cycle. For pivotal roles, if I become choosy and prioritise only on quality, I would have to sit at home," says Achyuth, who doesn't adhere to a specific genre while choosing characters, citing it as an advantage for actors. "I don't have a barometer to determine what genre works for me."

With many years of experience, Achyuth admits he was once tempted to direct, but the actor in him prevailed. "I consider it a temptation. I even almost wrote a script but decided against it," he concludes.

'TRANSFORMING COMEDIAN CHIKKANNA INTO A HERO WAS A DELICATE PROCESS'

says director Anil Kumar, as he discusses the intricacies of transforming a comedian into a full-fledged leading actor, ahead of the release of his upcoming film, Upadhyaksha

A SHARADHAA

TCHIKKANNA, celebrated for his comedic flair in over 250 films, is making a bold leap as a leading man with *Upadhyaksha,* presenting a dual challenge for both himself and director Anil Kumar. Scheduled for release on January 26, the film revolves around the protagonist's pursuit to become the village chieftain, setting the stage for a clash with Shivarudre Gowda, performed by P Ravi Shankar. As the story unfolds, Upadhyaksha finds himself entangled in a relationship with Shivarudre Gowda's daughter, Anjali, adding layers of tension and conflict. The highlight of the film happens to be Chikkanna portraying an all-new avatar.

In a candid conversation with director Anil Kumar ahead of the film's release, he talks about the intricate challenges involved in transforming a comedian into a leading actor. Anil Kumar reflects, "Having observed Chikkanna's work and having him as part of my previous film, *Rambo 2,* where he played alongside Sharan, the lead actor, I was familiar with his versatility. Moreover, he also shared screen space with Sharan in *Adhyaksha.* And with Upadhyaksha serving as its sequel, it was a seamless transition to shift the focus to Chikkanna's character in the upcoming film. While the audience has witnessed Chikkanna alongside a leading role, this characterisation required a balance to avoid a sudden and jarring tonal shift. Transitioning him into a hero demanded letting go of certain traits while preserving the essence of the old Chikkanna. It was a delicate process, but the workshop played a pivotal role in molding him into the character."

Anil Kumar reveals that Chikkanna underwent a physical transformation to convincingly play the role of a protagonist. He explains, "Although, in my perception, Chikkanna didn't require it, he embodied the essence of a hero. The story demanded a certain transformation in his physicality and demeanor. While Chikkanna is not a novice to the silver screen, in order to look at him through the lens of a protagonist, I needed to approach him like a debut actor."

With the story penned by Chandramohan, Upadhyaksha is produced by Smitha Umapathy under DN Cinemas banner. According to Anilkumar, the success of *Adhyaksha* further raised the expectations for *Upadhyaksha*. "It has been accepted well with the first set of audiences, which are mostly family viewers. We received positive feedback at a recently held private screening. Now we have to wait for the audience's response," he says.

Expressing his perspective on comedians transitioning into leading roles, a trend spanning two decades in Kannada cinema, Anil Kumar remarks, "Cinema as a platform has given rise to abundant opportunities. We have witnessed heroes evolving into directors, producers taking on directorial roles, and many such things. For a comedian, already armed with an audience, the challenge lies in elevating their character when stepping into the lead role, without compromising their strengths—qualities that made them likeable in the first place. When one comedian ascends to a hero's role, it paves the way for multiple talents aspiring to excel in other roles."

As for the story of Upadhyaksha, Anil Kumar assures that it is a joyous entertainer, which brings back most of the cast members from Adhyaksha. Apart from the addition of Sadhu Kokila and a cameo appearance by Sharan, the cast also includes Kari Subbu, Veena Sundar. The film also introduces Malaika Vasupal in the lead role. Upadhyaksha has music composed by Arjun Janya, cinematography by Shekar Chandra, and has K L Rajashekar penning the dialogues.

Chikkanna

Anil Kumar

NAGABUSHAN TAKES CENTRE STAGE AS *VIDYAPATI*

A SHARADHAA

ACTOR Nagabhushan and producer Dhananjay, who delivered a hit film with *Tagaru Palya*, are all set to collaborate for a new venture titled *Vidyapati*. This film marks the fourth project under the banner of Daali Pictures. Adding to the anticipation, the makers recently revealed the title and the first-look poster on the auspicious occasion of the Sankranti festival.

The talented duo of directors, Esham and Haseen Khan, known for their work in *Ikkat* which featured Nagabhusana, will be teaming up with the actor once again. The first-look features Nagabhushan compellingly portraying a Karate King.

The team is gearing up to commence shooting for *Vidyapati* in the upcoming week. Murali will be handling the cinematography, DossMode is the composer, and the action sequences will be choreographed by Arjun Master.

Nagabhushan

Vasishta Simha's upcoming crime thriller titled *VIP*

CE FEATURES

VASISHTA Simha's upcoming film with director Brahma has completed seventy-five percent of its shooting. The makers recently revealed that the film has been titled *VIP,* which stands for 'Vengeance in Progress'. The director describes it as a crime thriller, featuring a non-linear storytelling style. The narrative will portray the protagonist in dual shades.

The actor made the official announcement about the film on the auspicious occasion of Sankranti, and CE obtained a first look of the actor from the film. *VIP* is produced by Kalasrushti Productions and was shot in Bengaluru and Kodagu. Afzal, who plays a significant role, also serves as an executive producer. The cast includes Thejaswini Sharma as the female lead. She is best known for films like *English Manja, Mary,* and *Flat No.9.* The cast of the film also includes Balarajwadi, Sunil Puranik, and *Sparsha* Rekha in pivotal roles. VIP features cinematography by Rajeev Ganeshan and music by Raghavan Kartik. On the other hand, Vasishta Simha will also be seen in *Loveli,* which is gearing up for release.

Vasishta Simha